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Sixty-sixth session

Official Records

28th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 27 September 2011, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Meetarbhan (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Hamady Ould Hamady, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Hamady (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my honour and pleasure at the outset of this brief statement to welcome and congratulate the Republic of South Sudan upon its accession to membership in the United Nations and for its participation for the first time in the work of the General Assembly.

I am also happy to warmly congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election to the presidency of the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. Allow me to express our full confidence in him as he undertakes the exceptional efforts required to strengthen the progress achieved to date in terms of international peace and security, taking into account the need to preserve the well-being, stability and progress of our world. I pay tribute to the effectiveness of Qatari diplomacy and its important role in strengthening international peace and security.

I also pay tribute to the valuable efforts made by Mr. Al-Nasser's predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, who upheld the principles of dialogue and consultation in order to reach the best solutions on international issues. I also warmly congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment to head the Organization and wish him full success. I commend his persistent Herculean efforts to resolve many issues, including strengthening international peace and security, achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), combating climate change and mitigating the threats of famine and endemic disease, as well as all of the challenges that hinder the well-being of humanity.

The sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly is taking place at a sensitive political juncture in our region. The popular uprisings in many Arab countries have led to revolutions calling for democracy, justice, freedom and decent living conditions. My country was at the forefront of meeting these demands and aspirations. Over the past few years, we have experienced radical change in the form of a peaceful and flexible transition from a totalitarian regime that had suppressed freedoms and emptied the public coffers to a democratic system and credible institutions that have consolidated the rule of law and guaranteed individual and collective freedoms and the rights of all sectors of Mauritanian society, based on justice and the rule of law.

Those measures have included the organization of free, fair and transparent presidential elections that were monitored by international observers and even endorsed by their opponents. Our country has also

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begun enjoying a sincere political openness at all levels of society. A few days ago, we launched a genuine national political dialogue open to all of the country's political parties. In addition, media airwaves have been freed and licences issued to 10 radio and television stations to begin broadcasting in the near future.

In the context of good governance, my country has enshrined transparency in its administration and its strengthened and independent judiciary. We have achieved remarkable levels of growth through ambitious programmes to improve our population's standard of living. These programmes focus first and foremost on the most vulnerable sectors of society — low-income citizens and those living in poor neighbourhoods and isolated rural areas — allowing my country to achieve a stable domestic situation that will in turn foster efforts in our young, effective diplomacy.

We are a member of the African Union Peace and Security Council and chair the Good Offices Commission, established to bring together opposition parties in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire. We are fully convinced that dialogue and mediation are the best ways to resolve conflict and address crises, as indicated in the theme of the general debate of this sixty-sixth session.

Since the election of His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz as President, we have endeavoured to strengthen our presence within regional and international organizations, including the United Nations and its various specialized bodies, the Arab Maghreb Union, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Non-Aligned Movement, to name a few. We have also joined regional African and Caribbean groups to show support for their systems and decisions and as part of our strategy to broaden our principled foreign policy.

In that context, we reiterate our support for efforts to reform the United Nations and its various bodies, including the Security Council. We ask that Africa be given permanent representation, as it is the only continent that has lacked a permanent seat on the Security Council since the establishment of the United Nations. Our continent has 1 billion inhabitants and hosts more than two-thirds of United Nations peacekeeping operations. We also call for permanent representation for the Group of Arab States, whose population makes up more than 11 per cent of the world's inhabitants.

Consultations on Security Council reform have been ongoing for many years, and we call for continued consultations in order to achieve a comprehensive platform, supported unanimously by Member States, for reform of the United Nations and its working methods and decision-making processes. In that regard, my country believes that we should begin with the make-up of the Security Council, the definition of its competence and responsibilities, and institutional relations between the Council and the General Assembly in order to ensure the Organization's effectiveness and to fairly and accurately reflect, in a balanced manner, the will of the entire international community.

In that context, I remind the Assembly that Mauritania is a candidate for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the biennium 2012-2013, representing the Group of African States. Support for our candidacy was expressed by our continental organization, the African Union, at its Addis Ababa summit in January and Malabo summit in June. It also supports our conviction and profound belief in the mission and principles of the United Nations and our sincere will to effectively contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, play a positive role in the Security Council, and assume greater responsibilities in order to attain the noble objectives for which this Organization was created.

I note that Mauritania has adopted a policy of peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourly relations with the countries of its region. It is not party to any conflict and enjoys excellent and friendly relations with all countries of the world. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank all of the friendly, kindred States that have supported our candidacy.

We note with deep satisfaction the gargantuan efforts made during the sixty-fifth session, including the High-level Meeting on Youth and the High-level Plenary Meeting on the MDGs and the need to implement them. Nevertheless, we note and deplore the fact that the populations of most States continue to live in dire economic conditions that are not conducive to the achievement of the MDGs.

In that context, allow me to recall the steep rise in unemployment, especially among young people; the increased rate of abject poverty, especially in the most

vulnerable sectors of society; the decelerated growth in gross domestic product; the global recession; decreased official foreign investment, especially in Africa; the volatility of basic commodity prices, which has had devastating effects on the buying power of large sectors of the populations of developing countries; reduced net transfers to developing countries; decreased tourist revenue; increased maternal and newborn death rates; and the increased debt burden.

This latter issue is already a terrible economic burden on developing countries, and leads to the emptying of public coffers that are modest to begin with, especially in the light of their infrastructure and public service needs. In such economic conditions, the economies of the least developed countries face many enormous obstacles, making it increasingly difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. As we approach the deadline for achieving the MDGs, many developing countries remain far from doing so.

We call on wealthy developed States to contribute, in accordance with their promises, to the revival of these least developed countries so that they can provide acceptable levels of public services and guarantee civil peace, security and stability, and to strengthen the social fabric of these countries, which in turn will contribute to international peace and security.

Non-communicable diseases are another important public health issue. The extent of the spread of these diseases is truly catastrophic, and mortality rates are higher than those of all other diseases. Furthermore, their effects on health and the social and economic fields are a further obstacle to the attainment of the MDGs, especially Goals 4 and 5 relative to maternal and child health, which are closely linked to non-communicable diseases. This is especially true because malnutrition in pregnancy and early childhood is the source of hypertension and diabetes later in life.

This is why I note with satisfaction that my country has risen to the challenge posed by these diseases by establishing extensive health infrastructure and strengthening the human resources available to deal with such diseases. We have also built a specialized oncology hospital with the latest technology, a modern hospital for cardiovascular disease, a diabetes treatment centre and over 50 dialysis centres. All of these have been established in record time, less than two years since the accession to power of Mr. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz following the presidential elections of 18 July 2009.

Our country is closely following the situation in the Western Sahara. We reaffirm our support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to reach a comprehensive, lasting and just solution that enjoys the support of both countries, in order to strengthen peace and security in the area and to create an Arab Maghreb that is open to progress and development and responds to the aspirations of its peoples. This is a strategic option for my country.

I believe that the Israeli-Arab conflict is a source of tension and a threat to peace and security in a sensitive and vital region of the world. My country supports efforts for peace that will guarantee the recovery of all the rights of the Palestinian people and the creation of an independent Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with its capital in Jerusalem, coexisting in peace and security with the State of Israel.

This is why the Islamic Republic of Mauritania calls on the international community to recognize Palestine as an independent sovereign State and to facilitate its full membership of the United Nations on the basis of the request made last week by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Executive Secretary of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority. We must be faithful to the historic responsibilities of the international community towards Palestine; uphold justice, credibility and fairness with regard to this question; and ensure respect for the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy. We condemn the ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip and the acts committed by the Israeli military machine, killing civilians and destroying Palestinian facilities.

We call for concerted Arab, regional and international efforts to assist our Libyan brothers and sisters. We seek an end to the killings and a response to the legitimate aspirations to reform and change of our kindred people of Libya in order to guarantee their sovereignty and territorial integrity. We call on the international community to support the Libyan people and provide for all their needs in various areas so as to ensure the success of the transitional phase.

We also call on the international community to intensify and accelerate the international response to the tragic humanitarian situation resulting from the acute drought in the Horn of Africa. Speedy assistance

must be provided to the hundreds of thousands of Somalis citizens who have been forced to become refugees and are enduring tragic living and security conditions. Although our means are modest, we have provided assistance in the amount of $1 million to support the efforts of the African Union on behalf of the people of Somalia.

For many years now, our region, the African Sahel, has been the stage for the expansion of organized crime networks that traffic in drugs, weapons, ammunition and human beings, and are responsible for illegal migration flows across the area, kidnappings, abductions and terrorism. They pose a real threat to the peace and stability of our region.

We are convinced that there is a direct and close relationship between peace, development and democracy. For this reason, we believe that peace and security are preconditions to achieving development and democracy and to strengthening the rule of law institutions. We have adopted laws, prepared plans and taken steps to guarantee peace, security and safety for our citizens and foreign citizens living legally in Mauritania. Our security system has responded firmly and courageously to the threats of criminal terrorist groups against our security and that of our guests. We have succeeded in guaranteeing peace within our borders and security at border points, as attested to by all. We work in full understanding and coordination with Algeria, Mali and Niger to suppress the activities and free movement of these criminal terrorist groups.

The culture of peace, the ideals of tolerance among nations and civilizations, and upholding justice and law among peoples are the best ways to advance on the road to peace and security in our world. However, when issues remain pending for years; when there is a growing gap between rich and poor; when international economic institutions are fragile and weak; and when justice, fairness and equality are so slow to be provided, tensions will increase and extremism and terrorism spread. We in Mauritania reject terrorism in every form, and we adhere to the peaceful principles of Islam — principles of tolerance and brotherhood that reject violence and extremism. We believe that the international community should consider seriously why terrorism exists and root it out vigorously.

The international community must honour the commitments it has made since the Organization was established, but it can do so only if all the States and peoples of the world are able to benefit from available potential and resources and if development efforts in developing countries are supported so that people can live in dignity, freedom and equality. That is the only way we can achieve the noble goals that this Organization set for itself when it was created.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Ms. Antonella Mularoni, Minister for Foreign and Political Affairs, Telecommunications and Transportation of the Republic of San Marino.

Ms. Mularoni (San Marino): On behalf of the Government of the Republic of San Marino, I wish to congratulate Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. His long experience as Ambassador of Qatar to the United Nations and his deep knowledge of this Organization will be valuable resources in helping us move ahead with the reforms needed in the most important areas of United Nations activity. Over the past few years, Qatar has played a significant mediation role in the Arab world. The delegation of San Marino will cooperate fully in the work to be done.

I also wish to sincerely thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his energy and praiseworthy efforts, for the interest he constantly displays in all United Nations Member States, and for his constant and crucial presence in every politically important situation and emergency worldwide. His reappointment to a second term is important to promoting reform of the United Nations, guaranteeing the Organization's full effectiveness and preventing any action aimed at decentralizing global governance.

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude for the excellent work done by the United Nations, under the careful and effective leadership of the Secretary-General, in South Sudan. By putting an end to the violence and atrocities that have plagued that part of Africa for several years, the United Nations action led to the Republic of South Sudan's declaration of independence and its admission to our Organization as a new Member in July.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the tragic attack on the World Trade Center in New York, I would like to stress the importance of effectively combating terrorism and taking action to prevent the formation and development of terrorist groups. A

crucial task of policymakers is to create conditions in which terrorism cannot find a breeding ground.

This year's theme of the general debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means", unquestionably represents the purposes of diplomacy and the fundamental reason why States decided to cooperate within the framework of international bodies and mechanisms, headed by the United Nations. In a certain sense, it is also closely connected to the reform process of our Organization.

The principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes between States is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and in many General Assembly resolutions, and the Republic of San Marino can only support that principle. Indeed, our country has always tried to settle conflicts by peaceful means and has always believed in the power of dialogue, democracy and tolerance — values on which peaceful coexistence among peoples is based. With a view to achieving this principle in order to maintain international peace and security, the Republic of San Marino supports the role and authority of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

This year we have witnessed a massive popular uprising spreading across the squares of cities in North Africa and the Middle East. These are protests for democracy and freedom, respect for human rights and social justice. At the forefront of this revolution are young people from the middle classes. Despite their education, they have found themselves excluded from the labour market or suffering under poor working conditions.

The unusual scale of the Arab revolution, which has taken the world by surprise, demonstrates that major political and institutional changes are needed, because our economic and social foundations have also changed as a result of globalization. We cannot consider this spontaneous uprising of people looking for freedom, justice and democracy only in terms of security. If the United Nations intends to play a pivotal role in managing global governance, it should also be able to interpret the need for such changes and to support them, as far as possible. San Marino believes that the United Nations must continue to play a leading role in managing global governance. The deeply democratic nature of our Organization, with its universal participation and undisputed legitimacy, as well as the richness and diversity of cultures and traditions that are represented here, allow us to adopt an approach aimed at harmonizing the interests of the entire international community and at achieving sustainable human development.

The global economic and financial crisis, the devastating consequences of which are evident to all, has unfortunately demonstrated that our existing institutions are unable to respond rapidly and adequately to such crises. This has led to a growth in the influence of some informal groups, such as the Group of Eight and the Group of 20 (G-20), on the management of global economic governance. San Marino is grateful to those groups and for the role they have played.

However, we believe it important to emphasize that in their decision-making process, which should be more transparent and inclusive, it is essential that they take into account the interests, worries and aspirations of States outside their groups, particularly developing countries. The actions of such informal groups should be complementary to those of the United Nations, which will require the development of specific mechanisms to regulate their relations with our Organization. We welcome the Secretary-General's participation in the G-20 meetings and the consultations held by the rotating presidencies with the United Nations. However, we stress the importance of transparency in relations between these informal groups and the United Nations system, the only Organization in a position to take decisions whose legitimacy no one can challenge.

The Republic of San Marino is concerned about the consequences of the economic and financial crisis and other crises closely and inevitably linked to it. Unemployment is a very serious problem that faces every country without distinction. Furthermore, in many States the youth unemployment rate is twice as high as that for adults. Long-term unemployment has also risen in the past few years. We believe that the United Nations should pay special attention to the issue of unemployment.

Unfortunately, the negative effects of the global economic and financial crisis are still visible today. Although the international economy experienced a modest recovery last year, we have not yet emerged from the 2008 crisis. And beyond the problem of unemployment, we are now confronting a global sovereign debt crisis.

Is there a good recipe for recovery from the crisis? Is a rigorous economic policy sufficient? Do innovative measures for relaunching the world's economy exist? Can these measures be shared, or are we facing a deep systemic crisis requiring an in-depth analysis of the way our societies function and a rethinking of current business models? I believe that if the United Nations focused on these important issues, its leading role in global governance could not be questioned by anyone.

The destinies of our peoples are linked to global threats in an increasingly direct way. Today, the threats of climate change and biodiversity loss, economic, financial and employment crises, food security, public health, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons and the fight against terrorism are recognized as being interdependent. On that basis, we should create a new form of international cooperation and multilateralism so as to coordinate our policies at the international, national and regional levels. We have a duty to guarantee the full effectiveness of the Organization's activities with a view to preserving and strengthening its essential value as a point of reference for the international community.

The interdependence of such threats is more evident now than ever before. That is the case, for example, of the impact of climate change on world food security, which in turn poses a threat to security and peace, not only in Africa, where perhaps this relationship can more easily be observed, but throughout the world. Food insecurity fuels violent social conflicts. Climate change leads to a reduction in global food production, the most damaging effects of which are experienced in Africa and Asia.

The populations of countries in a post-conflict situation, countries that depend more directly on agriculture or the poorest developing countries will have more difficulties than others in coping with rising food prices due to droughts or other disasters caused by climate change. Our country is following the humanitarian emergency in the Horn of Africa with great concern. The populations of Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti are the victims of a severe drought. This is a humanitarian emergency affecting over 12 million people, including many women and children.

The Republic of San Marino is grateful to the Secretary-General for his rapid and significant actions in benefit of the affected populations. We also thank the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Central Emergency Response Fund for their immediate response and their substantial contribution to resolving the humanitarian emergency in the Horn of Africa, and Member States for their financial commitments.

Another but no less important effect of climate change is sea-level rise, which has an impact on the very existence of many Member States. This problem affects not only small islands, but also large islands and countries with extensive coastlines. Therefore, this phenomenon affects a significant number of United Nations Member States.

The implications, interdependence and effects of serious global threats on populations and world peace and security are increasingly evident. With a view to addressing such challenges, we need a strong United Nations, as well as effective and coordinated action in our economic, environmental and food policies at all levels — both globally and regionally. These policies should be designed to achieve sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth.

As I mentioned earlier, this year's theme is inevitably linked to the reform of the United Nations. That reform will be fundamental to future world stability and the maintenance of international peace and security. It must remain the target of all our efforts.

The Republic of San Marino has been following with interest the Security Council reform process since 1994. In that regard, it is grateful to Ambassador Tanin for the wisdom and impartiality with which he has presided over the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform and for his tireless efforts to reach the broadest possible political agreement. We are convinced that intergovernmental negotiations are the right framework within which to find a solution that reflects the interests and positions of all Members. It is essential to move beyond respective initial positions in order to negotiate the broadest possible agreement. The Republic San Marino believes that the five key issues of reform — categories of membership, the question of the veto, regional representation, the size of an enlarged Council and its working methods, and its relationship with the General Assembly — are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole.

Another major reform in the United Nations to which our country attaches great importance is the

revitalization process of the General Assembly. The Republic of San Marino supports this reform process and, in that regard, wishes to thank Lithuania and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for having co-chaired the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Revitalization of the General Assembly this year.

The revitalization of the General Assembly is a politically necessary reform and, at the same time, essential to the future of the United Nations. It is a reform that should involve all States in reaching an agreement based, again, on the broadest possible political consensus and aimed at reaffirming the central role of the General Assembly as the most representative body of the United Nations, as well as the role and leadership of its President. Reform should make the work of the General Assembly more effective, prevent duplication of its activities, and improve its relations with the other United Nations bodies. Nevertheless, the revitalization of the General Assembly should not concern these aspects alone, however important they may be. The Assembly should become a key forum where solutions can be found to the problems posed by the global threats that increasingly unite the destinies of our peoples.

There are many issues and themes on which the United Nations focuses its attention, and it is impossible to address all of them. Therefore, I will highlight some aspects that are perhaps lesser known, but no less important.

About 15 per cent of the world's population has some kind of disability, while between 2 to 4 per cent suffers from severe disabilities. Since the adoption in 2006 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we have witnessed a clear affirmation of the rights of the disabled. Today, the Convention has been ratified by over 100 countries. The international community has taken important steps forward in terms of equality for and non-discrimination towards disabled people, as well as their full inclusion and participation in the social, political and cultural life of societies. However, much remains to be done in order to implement the Convention, including the establishment of legislative frameworks and policies at the national and international levels.

The international community should also deal with the strong relationship between disability and poverty, and include that issue in future political strategies. A similar approach is fundamental in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. At present, 80 per cent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries and most live below the poverty line. In addition, many of the children who do not attend school have some kind of disability. Therefore, it is clear that targeted strategies and policies taking into due account the situation of children with disabilities should be adopted to achieve the Goal of universal primary education.

More than 8 million children under five years of age and 350,000 mothers die every year. Today, 67 million children are still out of school, and 195 million children under five years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition, which remains the major cause of childhood death. Every day, more than 1,000 babies are born with HIV and about 5 million young people between 15 and 24 years of age are living with this virus.

Children continue to be the most vulnerable to and most affected by violence, abuse and exploitation. Currently, more than 200 million children, especially those in developing countries, do not have a birth certificate. Sadly, most can barely access basic services, such as health care and education, or enjoy their rights. Also, it is difficult to protect them. This threatens to seriously undermine the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The Republic of San Marino joins the international community in supporting resolution 65/1, entitled "Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals".

Gender equality is rightly placed high on the agenda of the United Nations. In many countries, maternal mortality figures are still worrying, especially in the poorest areas of the world. Furthermore, young people, girls and women are the most affected by HIV. Unfortunately, trafficking in women and children remains a serious problem. Women and girls continue to be subjected to humiliating practices, such as the payment of the bride price, child marriage, kidnapping and sexual violence, including domestic violence.

Protecting the rights of women in conflict and post-conflict situations continues to be another high priority for the United Nations. Women facing such situations are very often victims of sexual violence, mass rape, torture and arbitrary executions.

Schooling and education are vital to countering discrimination and favour the empowerment of women.

Improving the quality of and access to education for women and children requires providing them with instruments to improve their economic and social living conditions.

I have talked about groups of people who live in extremely difficult conditions in many areas of the world and represent a very large share of the world's population. The primary task of each individual and State is to support every effort to help them live in decent conditions and feel fully included in society. Their progress will be our progress, and their smile will be the light allowing us to look to the future with optimism.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. K. Shanmugam, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore.

Mr. Shanmugam (Singapore): Allow me to congratulate Ambassador Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I would also like to congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his unanimous reappointment to a second term.

I extend my warmest congratulations to South Sudan on becoming the newest Member of the United Nations family. We wish President Al-Nasser and Secretary-General Ban success in the year ahead.

The world has seen difficult times since the global economic crisis of 2008. This has been compounded by natural and man-made disasters, which have grown in scale and severity. The repercussions of those events produce unpredictable outcomes. Governments have to grapple with the challenge of reviving growth and creating jobs for our citizens, even as the uncertain global economic recovery comes under threat from the severe fiscal and debt crisis in the United States and eurozone. Fears about the risk of a double-dip recession remain.

Other important global challenges need serious attention and resources as well. Those include long-term issues such as sustainable development, climate change and water security. There are also immediate concerns such as food security, job creation and making our cities more livable. These are issues that require urgent joint action by the global community.

By next month, we will have 7 billion people to feed, clothe and find meaningful employment for. That is a stark reminder of the magnitude of our task. The United Nations must play an important role in dealing with these challenges. First, the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization can help ensure that the global economic framework remains conducive to growth amidst the maelstrom of economic instability.

We are in for a bumpy ride, with growth in all the major markets slowing, and there is no guarantee of quick recovery. At the same time, we face a worrisome rise in protectionist sentiments. A recent report by the World Trade Organization showed that the Group of 20 (G-20) countries introduced 122 new trade-restrictive measures from 2010 to April 2011. Too many countries are focused more on domestic political concerns than on implementing their multilateral commitments and taking concerted action at the global level. That is why the prospects for a breakthrough in the Doha Development Round continue to be slim.

As the pre-eminent multilateral institution in the world, the United Nations should take a strong stand, make a united pledge against trade-restrictive measures and continue to push for free trade. Fighting protectionist pressures collectively is important for the long-term sustainability of our economies. The philosophy of common enrichment that imbues the United Nations Charter must replace short-sighted strategies of survival if we are to truly take the path towards sustainability. Due to its sheer membership size and functions, the United Nations will need time to achieve consensus and make decisions. That leaves the door open for ad hoc coordination by smaller, informal groups, especially during critical periods like the fall of 2008. There is a role for smaller, regional groupings like the G-20 and the Group of Eight, which may be more efficient and dynamic in decision-making.

A certain amount of fluidity is a given in global governance for some time to come, and even necessary in order to tackle increasingly complex and varied global problems. But ultimately, a balance needs to be struck between efficiency and genuine legitimacy. The G-20 accounts for over 80 per cent of world trade and gross domestic product, but that still leaves the majority of countries and a significant number of people outside of that group. There is scope for the United Nations to play a meaningful role by ensuring that all groupings take into account and promote the greater interest. The United Nations must also act together with such groupings as complementary parts

of the international system, not as mutually exclusive competitors.

The United Nations also has an important role in tackling two other challenges — food and water security, which are two sides of the same coin. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has reported an escalation of international food prices to levels not seen in decades. And according to the World Bank, rising food costs have pushed 44 million people into extreme poverty and hunger since June 2010. The hunger crisis in the Horn of Africa is but one face of this devastation.

Equally critical is the challenge of water security. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has pointed out that about one-third of the world's population lives in countries with moderate to high water stress, with a disproportionate impact on the poor. With current projected global population growth, the task of providing water for human sustenance will become increasingly difficult, and increasing competition over this scarce but vital resource may fuel instability and conflict within and between States.

The United Nations is doing a great deal in both areas to proactively foster collaboration among Member States. UNEP has long actively addressed the water issue, together with partner United Nations agencies and other organizations. Looking ahead, the United Nations can do more to build synergies of technology, policy and capacity in this field. In this regard, events like the annual World Water Week in Stockholm come to the forefront of the public's minds when talking about championing water issues.

Likewise, since 2008, Singapore has organized the Singapore International Water Week, a global platform that brings together policymakers, industry leaders, experts and practitioners to address challenges, showcase technologies, discover opportunities and celebrate achievements in the water world. In Singapore, we have always regarded water as a strategic resource. We have invested considerable resources in researching and testing new technologies. We would be happy to share our experiences.

I am certain that there are also many other success stories of countries that have adopted modern technology and sound policies to overcome their water insecurity. That is why Singapore is happy to be a member of the Green Group, an informal grouping initiated by Slovenia, whose members discuss ways to augment our collective experiences in water management. That model can be replicated by the United Nations to include more Member States.

We also need to look at the processes, procedures and leadership within the United Nations. The efficiency of our responses can and should be reviewed and improved upon. At present, there is a disconnect between the proliferation of resolutions, which we debate year after year, and actual present realities. There is a great need to coordinate better between New York and the ground. The immense good work in the field that various United Nations personnel, such as our humanitarian and aid workers, are doing has to be better related to what Member States do at Headquarters.

While established processes are important, that should not hamper innovative thinking and solutions. For example, we should set definitive timelines and specific objectives for resolutions, and retire others. Let us focus on what needs to be done, who should do it, and by when it should be done. This will ensure that there are targeted outcomes and real implementation. This may seem like a small, procedural change, but to borrow a phrase, sometimes little things can make a big difference.

The alternative is to leave the shaping of the new global governance to other groupings, which will by definition be less inclusive. That will lead to a further marginalization of the small and the weak. The United Nations needs to find ways to work with limited groupings as complementary parts of the international system. This is what the Global Governance Group, or 3G, has sought to achieve.

To act as a bridge between the United Nations and the Group of 20, the 3G has provided ideas to strengthen the latter's engagement with the United Nations. The 3G has focused on areas of ongoing and potential cooperation such as development, tackling the problem of food security and fostering the growth of livable cities. It has also called for a comprehensive approach to addressing the different factors affecting food security and the volatility of food prices. That includes a call for a renewed political commitment to a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, which we believe is critical to achieving food security.

The United Nations remains the only truly universal and international organization. There is no alternative to the United Nations. The steady expansion of its membership from 51 at its founding in 1945 to 193 today is a testament to the value that countries accord to membership in this Organization.

The United Nations is uniquely placed to influence our collective future. However, we should not take this position for granted, for the Organization's ability to influence global issues is ultimately dependent on the decisions that we as Member States take at the United Nations.

Sixty-five years ago, following the devastation of World War II, we managed to forge a consensus that was underpinned by the notion of inclusive global citizenship and manifested by the establishment of a set of international institutions, practices and norms. At the forefront was the United Nations Charter.

Globalization and economic integration have since redefined global governance and decision-making. The United Nations needs to adjust its processes to this new environment. But at the core, its values remain the same: to maintain international peace and security and to promote development, human rights and respect for the rule of law.

It is up to us, the Member States, to rally the necessary political will to put aside narrow self-interests and act for our collective good and secure the well-being of our future generations.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency, Mr. Sergei Martynov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus.

Mr. Martynov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): Much has been said from this rostrum in recent years about global governance. Yet in fact there is a pervasive feeling that chaos is inexorably engulfing our planet. Indeed, one global crisis comes hard on the heels of another. International law is being shamelessly trampled. Inequality and poverty are on the rise, and above all, an ever increasing number of people in the world are exposed to suffering.

This is the logical outcome of the world operating without a system and order. Twenty years ago, the international community had its own constitutional moment as a result of the end of an epochal confrontation, an opportunity to elaborate a comprehensive strategy for stable development of the world in the future. We missed that opportunity, first of all because egoism and gloating rather than common sense took the upper hand in the mindset of the so-called winners.

The lack of common vision excluded the possibility of our taking effective concerted action. As a result, the international community today is only reacting to ever-rising global challenges, having no recourse to instruments that might prevent them. The situation is bound to persist unless we arrive together at a set of long-term, efficient measures. We need a global strategy against chaos.

The failures of the international community over the past twenty years suggest that for such a strategy to become a strategy for success, it would have to be built around the following three foundations: strengthening international law, establishing global partnerships and revitalizing the United Nations.

The history of mankind has always been the history of the opposition of power and law. Only in the past century has that argument been resolved, and only de jure, in favour of the latter. By the way, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that a civilization is shaped by its transition from power to law.

Belarus is firmly convinced that a strategy against chaos cannot succeed if we fail to preserve and strengthen the system of international law as a deterrent against lawlessness and impunity. Clearly, there is more than enough reason to be concerned, since power, de facto, dominates law more often than not.

This year we have witnessed far-reaching changes in the Middle East. The countries of that region have the inalienable right to determine their own way of development. All of us must respect the choice made by those States and refrain from interfering in their internal affairs. That is our international obligation as Member States of the United Nations.

Unfortunately, not every country complies with its international obligations concerning the free choice of development paths. For decades the United States of America has maintained an economic, trade and financial blockade against freedom-loving Cuba. That is a clear violation of United Nations principles and decisions.

Belarus has also found itself the target not only of malicious attacks but also of economic sanctions for the choice that the Belarussian nation made with the election of its own President. Belarussians will never renounce their right of choice. Determining our own path of development is a sacred value to us. Neither sanctions nor blackmail and threats will alter our stance. Justice is on our side.

Belarus has never tried to teach anyone how to live. We consistently advocate the need to respect the diverse development paths of the world's nations. The Republic of Belarus stands ready to develop mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries, even those with whom we continue to have acute differences. After all, we are simply asking that others treat us as we treat them, with respect and equality. That is our right too.

The great Albert Einstein once said: "Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them." The growing transnational challenges and threats cannot be successfully addressed through traditional foreign policy tools such as balance of power, spheres of influence, sanctions and threats. We need new forms of cooperation that factor in the two contemporary global shifts that foreign policy analysts correctly emphasize: from the West to the rest, and from States to non-State actors.

We believe that global partnerships among States, international organizations, civil society and the private sector represent the best form of cooperation for facing those and any other challenges.

Global partnerships constitute an integral part of the strategy against chaos. It is just such partnerships that can ensure a real pooling of efforts by interested stakeholders in today's world in order to oppose the whole array of challenges and threats that recognize no borders. We are certain that at the international level there is no alternative to integration and inclusiveness. Globalization and interdependence have made all of us equally vulnerable to transnational problems. Thus, there cannot be well-being and stability in the world for the few while others live in poverty and suffering.

The profound changes in Africa and the Middle East caused by the growing problems of poverty and inequality dictate the need to achieve a global partnership for development. Last year's High-level Meeting at the United Nations and the Seoul Meeting of the Group of 20 made important contributions to the efforts in this field. At the same time, the relentless rise of oil, food and energy prices across the globe points out a new strain on development, hence the need for more proactive and unconventional approaches.

Among such specific approaches, we consider it important to address the issue of the transfer of effective, cutting-edge energy technologies to developing and middle-income countries. That is also a key element for overcoming the problems of climate change. What is crucial here is that such technologies already exist and are established in many parts of the globe. Therefore, the difficulties are not technical.

Ultimately, let us grasp one point: today it is impossible to have a green paradise for the affluent countries while the poor ones live in a contaminated hell. The finite nature of Earth rules out such a scenario.

As a practical step, Belarus would like to suggest setting up a global mechanism — through a General Assembly resolution on new and renewable sources of energy and under the outcome document of the Rio+20 Conference — under the aegis of the United Nations to ensure access to modern energy technologies for all countries of the world. That would be our best contribution to the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All that we are to celebrate in 2012.

Over the past year, we have made important strides in forging the Global Partnership against Slavery and Trafficking in Human Beings in the Twenty-first Century, initiated by Belarus. The implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is under way. Interested States, international organizations and civil society, along with the private sector, are already actively participating in the process. It is gratifying that these efforts have focused on protecting the rights of victims.

Throwing its full weight behind such an approach, Belarus was among the first States to make a voluntary contribution to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking. We are grateful to those countries that joined in the work of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking.

Among the prospects for establishing global partnerships, we see as highly promising the theme of supporting youth. At the Assembly's High-level Meeting on Youth last year, Belarus came up with the initiative to create a partnership to that effect. We

welcome the High-level Meeting on Youth held in July this year in the context of the International Year of Youth. We hope that the event will be followed by the development of efficient global policies to protect the interests of youth.

There is a natural place where a strategy for development for the future must be devised and implemented. That place is the United Nations. The question today is, to what extent is the United Nations fit to take this task upon itself? Let us be frank. We all have claims against the United Nations. Indeed, the major task of the Organization over the past years seems to have been to survive various crises rather than to solve, let alone prevent, them.

Is the United Nations to blame for this state of affairs? Let us be outspoken once more and say "No". The United Nations is us. It is us, the Member States, who are at fault, because together we failed both to grasp what kind of world we wanted to build and to adjust the United Nations to the new realities. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the United Nations has more frequently served as a stage for individual actors rather than as a platform for common action.

The need to revitalize the Organization stands out sharply as never before. We need to reform the principal organs of the United Nations and the fundamental orientation of its activities.

The Security Council should not stay fixed in a form that was appropriate in era of realpolitik. In the interests of developing countries above all, we are convinced that the Council must be enlarged in both categories. Bringing the Council's working methods into conformity with the spirit of the age must serve to enhance the authority and efficiency of its work.

The world is plagued by severe economic problems, yet the substantial economic capacities of the United Nations have not been properly utilized. The activities of the Economic and Social Council should be aligned with solutions to the urgent problems of Member States to a much greater extent than they are now. Belarus is eager to contribute to this work, including as member of the Council, provided that next month Member States do Belarus the honour of electing it to that vital United Nations body.

Strengthening the United Nations is impossible without striking a balance among the interests of various groups of countries. Several years ago, Belarus was among the Member States that initiated efforts to have the General Assembly pay greater attention to the problems of middle-income countries. We are glad to see that since then there has been a growing understanding of the significance of that group of countries in world political and economic processes. At the current session Belarus, together with like-minded countries, will continue efforts to guide United Nations organs conducting operational activities towards a more robust and efficient response to the specific needs of that group of countries and its many members.

The authority of the United Nations among the world's ordinary people is high in places where it really helps in the transition from chaos and violence to order and stability through its peacekeeping activities. In our view, efforts to strengthen this domain demand the widest support. Responding to the request of the Secretary-General, Belarus started contributing as it could by taking part in peacekeeping operations.

There is also the need to enhance the mediation role of the United Nations in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. For that it is important not only to build up the Organization's internal capacities, but to ensure active United Nations cooperation with regional organizations, for instance the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which know best the problems in their own areas of responsibility. As the current Chair of the CSTO, Belarus stands ready to assist in this effort as much as it can.

Martin Luther King once said, "The time is always right to do what is right." Let us heed this reasonable advice and, as the international community, do without delay what we must do.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abubakr A. Al-Qirbi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Al-Qirbi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate our brother Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. I am fully confident that, given his renowned experience and wisdom, he will ably execute the functions of his position. I wish him every success in his work. I would like to express our thanks and appreciation to Mr. Joseph Deiss for his constructive efforts in presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

Our thanks also go to Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his deserved re-election as Secretary-General of the United Nations. We wish to express our thanks and appreciation to him, as well as to the entire Secretariat staff for their work over the past year, in particular for their follow-up of the situation in my country.

We wish to congratulate the people of the Republic of South Sudan on that country's establishment and accession to the United Nations. We also wish to congratulate the National Transitional Council of Libya for its presence among us and for its representation of the brotherly Libyan people.

Since January, my country has been experiencing an acute political crisis. The political opposition that has been one of the main components of our system since the unified State of Yemen was established in May 1990 decided to relinquish all common denominators and rejected the principle of consensus, refusing to implement the agreement reached since 2006 following its defeat in the presidential elections. It has created crises, raising its demands and rejecting all compromises and solutions. Realizing that democratic means would not enable it to seize power, the opposition resorted to political manoeuvres, including violence, threatening the outbreak of civil war and complete devastation in Yemen. That could undermine all the achievements of the Yemeni people in the modern era, as well as their struggle to establish a democratic political system and to protect their national identity, social fabric, unique human harmony and the system that we have managed to build.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Yemen's national movement made great progress by establishing a unified State of Yemen, founded on pluralistic democratic principles and coupled with various civil institutions that promoted and respected human rights. However, those who wished narrow, individual and partisan interests to prevail did not support that historic achievement. Therefore, they tried to stir up trouble, using the conflicts and mistakes made in Yemen in the early days of our unified State, as well as the challenges to development — the uncontrolled population growth, the prevailing poverty, the lack of national resources, increasing drought and desertification, and the scarce water and oil resources, which were the main source of income.

All those factors have made it impossible for thousands of university graduates to find employment, which has led to social and political tensions and frustration. But all the opposition forces used the tidal wave of change witnessed by Arab countries to prevent Yemen from achieving democratic change through elections. However, we respected young people's demand for change and started a dialogue with them in order to meet their demands for reform. We have created tens of thousands of jobs in order to alleviate unemployment.

However, the opposition parties abused and misused the protests of our young people in order to seize power, and some of their elements have carried out subversive acts to sabotage the youth movement and its just demands. The opposition parties rejected the results of the democratic elections that were conducted under the international monitoring of the European Union, the Democratic National Institute and several international organizations, which verified that the elections were fair, democratic and transparent.

Our Government showed its readiness to meet the requests of our young people and their legitimate demands to build a better future for us and for prosperity — a future that is hindered by my country's weak economy, limited national resources and the prevalence of poverty and unemployment, as well as by terrorism and the repercussions of the global financial crisis. Our Government kept on calling on our development partners and friends and international organizations to provide financial and economic support in order to achieve sustainable development in Yemen, which would ensure security and stability in our country.

The main reason for, and primary cause of, the current upheaval in Yemen is the dissatisfaction of the opposition and its refusal to endorse the election that took place in 2006. In that election our people showed confidence in the President of the Republic and chose him as our President. The opposition's rejection of that process has led to the crisis that we are witnessing today at the economic, development, security and political levels.

Despite the intransigence of the opposition, the President of the Republic offered compromise in order to achieve reconciliation between the opposition and the Government. That has led to the postponement of parliamentary elections for two years. However, the efforts of our President continue through his initiatives before Parliament and the Consultative Council,

whereby he affirmed that he had no intention of running in the presidential elections and that he accepted the amendments to the Constitution and the electoral law, as well as an entire package of political reforms.

Our country has incurred heavy losses, estimated at more than $2 billion, as a result of the chaos caused by the opposition parties, which have tried to cut off roads, blow up oil pipelines and cut power lines in many of our cities, in particular in the capital, Ta'izz, Aden and Abyan. However, the Government continued to seek a peaceful solution to the political crisis, calling on the opposition to come to the table and begin dialogue. We in Yemen are confident that the recent division will be overcome by returning to constitutional legality and remedying certain shortcomings.

The Government offered a new opportunity for dialogue by endorsing the initiative of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as the foundation for a solution to the political crisis, especially given that His Excellency President Ali Abdullah Saleh decided to entrust his Vice-President with all constitutional powers, to initiate dialogue with the signatories of the Gulf initiative and to create a mechanism that would guarantee a smooth and democratic transfer of power. That would allow for reconciliation, reform, change and reconstruction in Yemen without any violation of security, the Constitution or democratic principles.

We believe that Yemen, as a country that opted for dialogue as a means of overcoming the political crisis, will provide a model for change in which all parties are winners and the status of women is enhanced. The President, following his return to Sana'a, declared in no uncertain terms that he supported the GCC initiative and was committed to it. He called on all parties to initiate dialogue and to reach a compromise with a view to its implementation.

My country is continuing to make every effort to fight Al-Qaida and its terrorist acts in our country despite our Government's limited resources. We have dealt some serious blows to Al-Qaida in Abyan province in recent weeks. What we need at the international level is an integrated global strategy that would help us build our national capacities and thereby enable us to fight extremism and terrorist ideology. Such a strategy would not involve military force only but would be of a social, educational and political nature and would strive to eradicate poverty and achieve universal justice.

The Republic of Yemen attaches primary importance to human rights, which is one of the main pillars of the United Nations. Since the return of unity to Yemen in 1990, my country has made great strides in this area. We have established a Ministry for Human Rights and have become a signatory and party to a number of international human rights instruments and conventions, on whose implementation we submit periodic reports. We have also submitted our national reports within the context of the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council, with which we cooperate.

In that connection, we welcome the outcome of the review conducted by the Human Rights Council in Geneva and New York, in which we participated actively. There is no doubt that during the political crisis many human rights violations have been committed by all parties. The Government nonetheless showed a readiness to conduct independent national investigations and to bring the perpetrators to justice. The Government also opened its doors to the fact-finding mission sent by the Human Rights Council. In response to an invitation by our Government, the mission visited Yemen in July and submitted its report to the Council on 19 September. However, my country believes that resolving the political crisis is the key to stopping all violations of human rights.

The Government of Yemen, during its chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China in 2010, continued to actively and sincerely work to achieve consensus and unity within the Group, which led to a consensus on many issues of interest to the Group, including, inter alia, climate change, the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, and United Nations reform. In that connection, we wish every success to the Republic of Argentina during its chairmanship of the Group. We also wish every success to the fraternal Republic of Algeria, which will chair the Group in 2012.

The Israeli-Arab conflict represents the main threat to international peace and security. An objective understanding of the conflict clearly shows Israel's intransigence and its Government's policy of establishing settlements, its rejection of the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, its

refusal to abide by international legality, and its rejection of the Arab Peace Initiative. We call upon the international community and the peace sponsors, including the United States of America, to continue their efforts to achieve universal recognition of a sovereign State of Palestine and to allow it to join the United Nations as a fully fledged Member of the Organization and other world organizations and organs.

Allow me in closing to reiterate my thanks to the Secretary-General for his efforts in following the crisis in Yemen. I wish also to thank all the United Nations agencies for their humanitarian efforts in my country during this political crisis.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): This year the session of the General Assembly is opening at a time when international relations are in a state of turbulence. The Middle East and North Africa have gone through a period of large-scale changes, and the situation is volatile in certain other parts of the world. We have not yet been able to put the global economy back on the track of progressive sustainable development. The increasing number of alarming factors has been accompanied by an exacerbation of social, inter-ethnic and intercultural conflicts as well as outbreaks of extremism.

Just as a ship caught in adverse weather conditions needs a united crew and a compass to find the right course, the international community today needs in particular to deploy joint efforts to respond to common challenges and set clear guidelines to strengthen global governance mechanisms. We are convinced that such guidelines should include, first and foremost, the rule of international law; clear, strict and responsible reliance on the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations; and the will to implement a positive unification agenda.

The United Nations remains a pillar of international relations and equitable multilateral cooperation in the interests of all States. It has a unique legitimacy and the necessary authority to respond adequately to the variety of contemporary risks and threats. It is the United Nations that should continue to provide political, legal and moral leadership in dealing with global challenges, to establish equitable principles and standards of interaction, to monitor their implementation and to render necessary assistance and support for the States that need it.

Ten years ago on September 11, a horrible terrorist attack was committed in this city. We are convinced that it is necessary to strengthen multilateral cooperation in countering international terrorism on both the global and regional levels. However, the additional mechanisms to be created in this area should be incorporated in our common work within the United Nations, with due account taken of its central coordinating role in combating terrorism.

Wide international cooperation is needed to keep the situation in the global economic and financial system under control. One can hardly deny the importance of the role that the Group of Twenty (G-20) plays in the post-crisis recovery of the world economy. Today, it is important to finalize the process of reforming the global financial and economic architecture and to implement everything we have agreed on, rather than to stop halfway. The efficiency of these efforts will only grow if the G-20 strengthens its dialogue with the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

A significant contribution to the reform of the global economy and finance is being made by BRICS — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — a global-scale association of five major, rapidly growing economies that reflects the realities of the evolving multipolar world. BRICS does not aim at confrontation with anyone. Its goal is to enhance productive multilateral collaboration to address the urgent problems of the contemporary world.

Sustainable development requires a reliable supply of energy resources for the global economy. Russia has proposed drafting a convention on international energy security that would cover all aspects of global energy cooperation, taking into account the balance of interests of all actors in the international market. We call for the start of the practical preparation of this document.

As in economics, the logic of joint consolidated actions should prevail in matters of security and the elimination of surplus weapons worldwide. Russia and the United States made another important step towards nuclear disarmament when they signed the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Arms and began its implementation. Its practical realization will allow us to make sure that the Treaty is effective and viable and

to see how its fundamental principles are implemented. We call on all States with nuclear weapons capability to join the Russian-American efforts. We believe that further progress in nuclear arms reductions is possible only on a multilateral basis.

Moreover, progress in this area is inseparable from coordinated efforts to move forward on all aspects of strengthening international security and strategic stability. This includes development of universally acceptable approaches to missile defence issues, an accounting on the impact of strategic conventional arms, prevention of the weaponization of space and elimination of qualitative and quantitative imbalances in conventional arms.

The deployment of strategic missile defence elements in various parts of the world alters the overall configuration of international security. It is not enough to make statements that the increase in global missile defence capabilities would not undermine the basics of strategic stability. The issue is far too serious. We need solid legal guarantees that missile defence potential will actually be adequate to the declared objectives and will not disrupt global and regional balances. This holds equally true for both Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, where the missile defence factor is beginning to affect the strategic environment.

It is of primary importance for us to prevent the undermining of the non-proliferation regime. We call for universalization of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, strengthening of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system and the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Russia has been one of the main initiators of the proposal to convene in 2012 a conference on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East and is now working intensively, together with its partners, on the preparations for this important forum.

The early resolution of the nuclear problems of Iran and the Korean Peninsula would contribute to the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime. We see no alternative to their political and diplomatic settlement and to taking concrete steps to create the conditions for the resumption of negotiations. We call on all partners to address these tasks with utmost responsibility.

The situation around Japan's Fukushima Daiichi-1 nuclear power plant has highlighted the need to improve the international legal framework in order to ensure the safety of nuclear power facilities. The Russian Federation has made proposals to enhance the mechanisms of the Convention on Nuclear Safety and the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and to strengthen the relevant IAEA norms. We urge support for these initiatives.

In the age of new telecommunications technologies, international information security has become a challenge that requires coordinated efforts by the international community. Reliable protection of the field of information from malicious and criminal attacks is the goal of the initiative that Russia and its partners are promoting at the United Nations. During this session, we will put forward proposals on developing specific rules of conduct in this area.

In a polycentric world, an effective international architecture can be created only if it rests on regional building blocks. The enhancing of global governance at the regional level and the increasing role of regional organizations are an integral part of modern international relations. Integration associations and organizations in the Commonwealth of Independent States area contribute to these processes. The Eurasian Economic Community, with its $10 billion anti-crisis fund, operates in the financial and economic sphere. A customs union between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus has been created, and single economic space is taking shape with a view to establishing a Eurasian union.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) is a key tool for ensuring stability within the area of its responsibility. The signing of the joint declaration on cooperation between the United Nations Secretariat and the CSTO secretariat in March 2011 was a major step in the collaboration between these two organizations, primarily in the field of peacekeeping. We are ready to start working on its practical modalities. Russia consistently calls for interaction between regional organizations, under the auspices of the United Nations, to strengthen global stability on the basis of the solid legal framework of the Charter.

Priority should be given to equal and indivisible security, predictability, transparency and mutual respect, taking into account one other's interests. This

is exactly the aim of Russian President Medvedev's initiative to sign a treaty on European security. Its practical implementation would allow us to finally put a period to the post-cold war era, to establish a universal and clear framework for a reliable solution to such issues as missile defence and arms control, and to create a common space of security and development without dividing lines.

Achieving equal and indivisible security is an urgent issue for the Asia-Pacific region, with the Russian Far East and Eastern Siberia as integral parts. The joint initiative launched by the leaders of China and Russia in September 2010 is aimed at creating a comprehensive architecture for security and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region on a bloc-free legal basis. We could move closer to this goal by promoting a network of multilateral diplomacy, an idea that has been supported by the members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Progress in the settlement of regional conflicts would contribute to a more stable international environment. Today, special attention is given to the developments in the Arab world.

Russia condemns the use of violence against civilians and supports the aspirations of Arab peoples for the revival of their States and their democratic development and social and economic prosperity. At the same time, actions by the outside forces must be based on full respect for international law and be instrumental to the search for a political settlement between the authorities and the opposition. The attempts to go beyond the Security Council mandate are unacceptable, since they undermine its authority and compound the suffering of innocent civilians.

In this context, it seems quite pertinent that States and regional organizations commit themselves to strictly complying with the existing norms of international law, including humanitarian law, in order to protect civilians during armed conflict. This step, which further enhances the existing legal basis of international relations, would contribute to the strengthening of regional and global security in its modern, multidimensional interpretation.

The leading role in elaborating modalities for post-conflict resolution in Libya must be played by the United Nations and in particular the Security Council. That is precisely the goal of Security Council resolution 2009 (2011) of 16 September 2011, which established the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. We believe that it is time to take additional steps, including the lifting of the no-fly zone.

As for Syria, it is inadmissible to boycott proposals for a national dialogue, stir up confrontation and provoke violence, while neglecting the reforms — late in coming, but still achievable — proposed by President Al-Assad. It is important to encourage the authorities and the opposition to start negotiations and agree on the future of their country. We hope that the League of Arab States will make the necessary efforts.

The situation in the Middle East could be significantly improved by progress in the negotiation process, on the basis of the main parameters defined and recorded in Security Council resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative, and reiterated in the Quartet ministerial statement of 23 September. The only viable basis for a settlement is the coexistence of Palestinian and Israeli States in peace and security. We support the Palestinians' application to the Security Council and welcome the readiness reiterated by the President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mr. Abbas, to hold talks with Israel on the basis of the existing international legal framework.

We encourage the Cypriot communities to continue negotiations under United Nations auspices to achieve a comprehensive, just and viable settlement on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We call upon all parties to the Nagorno-Karabakh settlement process to take advantage of the additional opportunities arising from the efforts made in the context of Russia's mediation. We will promote confidence-building and ceasefire enforcement measures within the framework of the Troika of the co-Chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Minsk Group, together with American and French partners.

We hope that the decision taken in Moscow on 22 September on resuming official talks on a Transdniestrian settlement will encourage the parties to seek ways to arrive at mutually acceptable agreements.

We are strongly committed to doing our utmost to prevent a repetition of a scenario involving the use of force in the Caucasus, as happened in August 2008 as a result of a reckless venture by the ruling regime in Tbilisi. Russia is ready to act as a guarantor of

arrangements on the non-use of force between Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia, taking into account the earlier relevant statements made by the leaders of these three parties. We would welcome it if the United States and the European Union made similar commitments. As guarantors, we would be ready to take steps to prevent the resumption of violence in the region and, in the case of the wrongful use of force by either side, to work towards an early resolution of the situation on the basis of the existing norms of international law.

Russia is providing significant support for the efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan. At the same time, we call on the International Security Assistance Force to more effectively fight the growing Afghan drug threat. Central Asia and Russia are already facing a "heroin aggression", while the profits from drug trafficking are being used as the main source of financing the clandestine extremist underground in the region. The fight against this evil should be uncompromising, and it should target the entire drug business chain.

The problems on the African continent should be a focus of continuous attention on the part of the United Nations. Such attention should include development assistance as well as efforts to overcome the current humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa and resolve the numerous ongoing conflicts, while maintaining the leading role of the African Union.

The eradication of piracy remains a priority. It is necessary to accelerate the establishment of an international anti-piracy court mechanism in the region, in accordance with the Security Council resolution adopted on the initiative of Russia.

Experience has shown that pressure and unilateral sanctions cannot be a cure-all in addressing various conflict situations; they only complicate efforts to resolve them. We urge that an end be put to any actions that circumvent the Security Council. We also call for the lifting of the blockade of Cuba. Cooperation rather than isolation should be the method for settling conflicts in the twenty-first century.

The ongoing transformation in contemporary international relations makes it a priority task on the global agenda to expand intercultural, interreligious and inter-civilization dialogue in order to devise approaches to the problems of the modern world that are based on shared values. The degradation of fundamental moral values leads to the degradation of society. The recent tragic events in Norway, riots in Great Britain, protests by young people in other countries, and calls to suppress Christian minorities in the Middle East and North Africa — all of those events are the result of a deterioration in moral and ethical values. There can be no freedom without responsibility and no democracy without self-restraint. There is a clear and urgent need to counter the threats posed by nationalism, ethnic and religious intolerance. We therefore reiterate the importance of the recent High-level Meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Attempts to falsify or revise history are inadmissible, all the more so given that we are marking the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Nuremberg Tribunal verdict. Political correctness and talk of freedom of speech cannot serve as a cover when, in certain European countries, people who brought disgrace upon themselves by cooperating with the Nazis are being talked and written about in an increasingly elevated tone. Russia will never forget the countless military crimes committed by Hitler and his associates in our land and throughout Europe during the years of the Nazi aggression.

The rapid changes taking place in the world make it imperative to strengthen the role of the United Nations and to adapt it to contemporary realities while preserving — naturally — its inter-State character and the immutability of its Charter principles. A fundamental element of the Organization's renewal is the reform of the Security Council. We support a solution that is based upon the broadest possible agreement.

The world community faces many challenges, and the United Nations, as a major mechanism for global regulation, is today in demand as never before. Together we will find practical ways to effectively overcome the threats of the twenty-first century.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wilfred Elrington, Attorney General and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Belize.

Mr. Elrington (Belize): It is an honour for me to deliver this address on behalf of the people and the

Government of Belize. It is a particular privilege to do so with Mr. Al-Nasser at the helm of the Assembly. I say so because Belize has the distinct pleasure of having him as the Ambassador of Qatar to Belize, a role in which he has distinguished himself and his nation, much as he is doing in his role as President of the Assembly.

Today's world is characterized by disputes between neighbouring States which have resulted and continue to result in untold damage, loss of life and financial ruin to the feuding States. Thus Mr. Al-Nasser's selection of the theme "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes" for this year's general debate is a timely and appropriate one. We in Belize fully subscribe to the view that mediation is a much more sensible means of putting an end to disputes than the use of force or threats of force, especially in the case of neighbouring States whose people have to live side by side and who are often dependent upon one another for survival and security.

But today's world is also characterized by widespread anxiety, insecurity, unrest, violence and instability. This is manifested in our financial markets as well as in the streets of cities in the developed and the developing world. Threats, both natural and man-made, appear to be proliferating. Debt crises are now so globalized that they are dwarfing national fiscal and policy space. Drugs, arms and human trafficking dominate the global stage, while Mother Nature is undergoing extreme changes, leaving death, destruction and disaster in her wake.

Thus far, unfortunately, international responses to these catastrophic occurrences have been both uninspiring and inadequate.

Notwithstanding the armoury of human rights that are enshrined in our own Human Rights Charter, far too many people are still destitute, are still dying from hunger, are still casualties of preventable or curable diseases, are still illiterate, are still jobless and are still marginalized and excluded from their very own societies.

Three years after the 2008 economic and financial crisis, the global economy is once again bracing for another setback, as the recovery in major industrialized economies stutters and risks a very real danger of reversal. Terrorism remains no less of a global threat. Mortality from non-communicable diseases now rivals mortality from communicable diseases. And greenhouse gas emissions continue to fuel global warming at a perilous rate.

Faced with the plethora of ills that now beset our world, we in Belize entertain no doubt that if any institution holds the key to solving the world problems it is this Organization, the United Nations, and its various agencies and institutions. Belize is therefore looking to the United Nations to lead the charge and to partner with us in combating three of the most serious threats that presently confront us, namely, the threat posed by climate change, the threat posed by crime and violence and the threat posed by chronic non-communicable diseases.

For small island and coastal States like Belize, global warming poses an existential threat. We have already been overwhelmed by the nature, scale and frequency of the damage that extreme weather conditions, triggered by global warming, have wrought on our infrastructure and marine and terrestrial organisms. While we appreciate that each of us is primarily responsible for our own welfare and we are taking such measures as are within our competence to cope with our changing circumstances, climate change is a global problem that requires a global response based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

The President took the Chair.

To that end, some small island and coastal States, including Belize, are moving resolutely towards low-carbon and no-carbon emission economies. Today, 24 of our small island developing States (SIDS) have become partners in an innovative, sustainable energy initiative called SIDS DOCK, aimed at transforming our energy sector and catalyzing our sustainable economic development. However, in order to succeed in our initiative we will require delivery or transfer of the often promised environmentally friendly technology and the new and additional funding promised by the international community.

In that regard, we consider the upcoming Durban Conference on climate change of high importance. We believe that every effort should be made at the Conference to forge a climate change regime that will incentivize significant emission reductions and the protection and preservation of existing forests, while simultaneously creating disincentives to polluting actions. Additionally, clear, legally binding rules must

be hammered out with a view to guaranteeing the environmental integrity of our countries.

Over the last decade, crime and violence in Belize and the rest of Central America have escalated drastically, resulting in some 18,167 homicides. However, none of the arms used in those murders was produced in Central America. Those arms are the product of the illicit trafficking in guns and drugs between South and North America. The transnational nature of those crimes is exacerbated by cross-border collaboration among criminals. Confronting that type of criminal activity successfully will clearly require the collaboration and cooperation of the international community.

We in Belize have stepped up our national efforts, in conjunction with our neighbours in Central America, the Caribbean and the United States, to combat those criminal activities. But the going is difficult and progress is slow. We need more help from the international community. Ideally, we would need a universally applicable normative framework to regulate the trade in arms, such as an arms trade treaty that is legally binding, robust and comprehensive; one that establishes the highest possible standards for the transfer of conventional arms, especially small arms, light weapons and ammunition.

I now turn to some of the silent killers that are ravaging our Latin American and Caribbean communities — the chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as hyper-tension, diabetes and obesity. In the Caribbean today, NCDs are responsible for 62 per cent of deaths, 40 per cent of which occur prematurely. If the current trend continues, non-communicable diseases will account for three out of four deaths in the Caribbean by the year 2030.

Again, those diseases can be combated effectively only through collaborative efforts of the international community. In that connection, we welcome the conclusion of the recently held High-level Meeting on non-communicable diseases (A/66/PV.3 and A/66/PV.4), as well as the first comprehensive global political declaration addressing chronic non-communicable diseases (resolution 66/2). It should serve as a template for action at all levels. We will eagerly await the development of indicators and global targets aimed at achieving a 25 per cent reduction in non-communicable disease-related deaths by 2025. That will, no doubt, necessitate close collaboration and cooperation among Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector to facilitate access to medicines and healthy foods. Belize is committed to supporting that initiative unconditionally.

Belize is of the view that, given the quantum and scale of the problems which confront the world today and the unquestioned need for an ever-increasing amount of resources, the international community cannot afford not to avail itself of every source of assistance at hand. And in that regard, we wish to urge that the Republic of China, Taiwan, be allowed to participate meaningfully in the work of the United Nations. In a similar vein, we would urge that the embargo against Cuba, which the Assembly has denounced for many years, be brought to a speedy end.

Finally, while Belize appreciates the limitations of this United Nations, we also appreciate that there exists no better institution than this one, which is dedicated to world peace, security, justice and development. And even as we seek its reform, we recognize its primacy in international affairs and global governance. I am, therefore, pleased to assure you that Belize is fully committed to work within this Organization, through it and with it as it carries out its mandates.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Djibrill Ypènè Bassolé, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Bassolé (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): The annual general debate of the General Assembly always serves as an opportunity for the international community to consider the state of the world through a series of exchanges and thus combine innovative ideas to support our desire to create a community that will ensure a better future for all. Burkina Faso always participates in this meeting of the world partnership with great interest.

Before I go any further, please allow me, Mr. President, to offer you sincere and warm congratulations from the Government and people of Burkina Faso on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, for which you have chosen the theme of strengthening mediation as a means of preventing and settling conflicts. Burkina Faso fully supports this choice and is committed to sharing with the international community its experience in peace negotiations, particularly with

regard to the role of mediator for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that President Blaise Compaoré played in settling the crises in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

I would also like to commend your predecessor, Mr. Joseph Deiss, on the efficiency with which he guided the work of the sixty-fifth session. And I congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his successful reappointment to the leadership of the United Nations. I wish him health and every success for his second term.

I salute the Republic of South Sudan's achievement of independence and international sovereignty, and welcome it to the great family that is the United Nations. The Government of Burkina Faso offers its sincere and willing cooperation to the South Sudanese people and authorities.

Much has happened since our last session to affect the development of the world and our States. Some countries have been victims of natural catastrophe; others have experienced financial, political and social crises. At the beginning of the year my country, Burkina Faso, also had to deal with social demands arising from the difficult national and economic situation. Fortunately, those demands, which were followed by social unrest, were resolved, thanks to a sustained and inclusive dialogue initiated by President Compaoré. This dialogue, involving all of the country's social classes, enabled the Government to conduct an exchange of views with every element of our society on their concerns, with the aim of arriving at suitable solutions.

Furthermore, the Government of Burkina Faso, within the framework of strengthening the rule of law and improving and reinforcing our system of political and institutional governance, established an advisory council for political reform aimed at continuing with the political and institutional reforms that began several years ago. In the economic and social areas, as part of our accelerated growth and sustainable development strategy, my Government, despite its modest budget and many other constraints and priorities, continued its efforts to build a functioning economy, with a particular emphasis on strengthening certain key sectors, including education, health, water, training and youth employment; on improving socio-economic infrastructure, especially roads; and on encouraging the business environment.

Needless to say, this progress was made possible thanks to the cooperation and support of our bilateral and multilateral partners. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank them for their continuing commitment to supporting us and for their backing for our efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

At the subregional and continental levels, Burkina Faso, working within the framework of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, ECOWAS and the African Union, will continue to be constructively involved in strengthening the integration process. While we proclaim our faith and deep attachment to the regional integration process taking place in Africa, we are convinced that regional integration must be pragmatic and based on concrete achievements, which represent the only way we can realize our peoples' legitimate aspirations. At the regional level, we recognize the value of all the initiatives that the African Union has taken to manage and settle conflicts on our continent. Burkina Faso reaffirms its continuing readiness to contribute to maintaining peace, security and stability all over Africa.

The world is currently experiencing times of enormous uncertainty and anxiety as a result of international economic and financial instability, increased poverty, continuing deterioration of the environment and a growing number of natural disasters. In particular, the recent international financial crises are dangerously compromising the balance of our economies and putting our social cohesion to a terrible test. They demand a response, constant vigilance and firm solidarity on all our parts.

The harmful effects of climate change have spared no country; natural disasters, in particular, have compromised and shaken the foundations of development for many of us, especially the least-developed countries, which are especially vulnerable and suffer the most. In tackling this scourge, special attention and renewed effort on the part of the international community are more necessary than ever in regard to climate issues, as well as every other environmental concern. Among other initiatives, Burkina Faso commends that of Mrs. Hilary Clinton, Secretary of State of the United States, for the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, from which countries such as Burkina Faso could benefit greatly.

The High-level Meeting held during this session on the theme "Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication", as well as the signing by various countries, including Burkina Faso, of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, are also events worthy of commendation.

Burkina Faso considers particularly important all issues connected to the advancement of women and, to that end, has spared no effort to improve the social and legal status of women in our country. We therefore commend the Organization's establishment of UN-Women, and hope that this new body, which should be adequately funded, will be a genuine catalyst for United Nations activities in defence of women's rights. More specifically, we hope it will provide strengthened support for pro-women policies in developing countries. We are pleased that during this session the African Group will be introducing a draft resolution intended to ban female genital mutilation worldwide. We hope that it will be supported by the entire international community.

For more than a decade we have been working on the process of reforming the United Nations in order to enable it to be in step with the demands of a world in constant change. Unfortunately, despite significant progress, much still remains to be done. Burkina Faso believes that the reforms must take into account the interests of all Member States and increase our Organization's effectiveness in managing the peace and security, stability and development of all parties.

At the dawn of the third millennium, our hope and wish was that this millennium would see us reconcile with one another and bring peace, security and stability. Sadly, our planet is still beset by numerous conflicts, many of which bear the mark of international terrorism, which, needless to say, Burkina Faso firmly condemns in all its forms and manifestations. That is why Burkina Faso, which fervently advocates for the prevention and settlement of conflicts through dialogue, commends the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 65/283 on strengthening the role of mediation in peaceful settlement of disputes and conflict prevention and resolution. We are pleased that that resolution was introduced by the Group of Friends of Mediation, of which Burkina Faso is a member.

As we did in Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Darfur, Burkina Faso is fully prepared to contribute wherever it is called upon for mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The organization of free and transparent elections in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire came as a result of the successful facilitation efforts of Mr. Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso.

The Ouagadougou Political Agreement allowed Côte d'Ivoire to emerge from crisis. What it needs now is peacebuilding and reconciliation. We take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General, who effectively supported the efforts of ECOWAS and the inter-Ivorian dialogue facilitator. Beyond facilitation, we are prepared to assist all countries in our subregion in their quest for peace and stability in post-conflict situations. We call on the international community to support peacebuilding efforts, especially in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

Burkina Faso participates in the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, with a force of 800 men. The signing on 14 July 2011 of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur between the Government of the Sudan and the Liberation and Justice Movement represents significant progress towards restoring lasting peace.

Thanks to the trust placed in us by the African Union and the United Nations we were able to support the peace process, and we call on all parties to the conflict to sign the Doha Document. We express our recognition and profound gratitude to the Emir of Qatar, His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, for his support, which was critical to the success of the process.

In the framework of the Implementation Follow-up Committee, my country will continue to contribute to peacebuilding. We call on the Justice and Equality Movement, the Sudan Liberation Movement and the Government of the Sudan to bring hostilities to a complete halt in Darfur as soon as possible.

In North Africa a will for change has found expression in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. Burkina Faso expresses its solidarity with those countries in their quest for freedom and democracy. We reiterate our will to strengthen fruitful links of cooperation. Burkina Faso reaffirms its recognition of the Transitional

National Council in Libya, and we encourage it to continue to promote democracy, national cohesion, stability and security for all people living in Libya.

In the Middle East we closely follow the progress of the Palestinian question, and we support Palestine's request to be admitted to the United Nations as a full Member State. We reiterate our call for a lasting, comprehensive peace in the region that guarantees the freedom and right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and the security of the State of Israel.

Burkina Faso believes in multilateralism, in solidarity among peoples and in the virtue of dialogue among nations. My delegation notes with great satisfaction the peaceful climate that currently prevails in the relationship between the Republic of China on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China. That will favour the granting to the Republic of China on Taiwan the place that it deserves in the concert of nations, including its genuine participation in the activities of international organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and conferences such as those on the United Nations Climate Change Convention.

In conclusion, I wish to express the desire that the virtues of international solidarity and dialogue among nations will continue to inspire the United Nations, which is the pre-eminent forum for multilateralism, so that together we can respond to the challenges that our world faces.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Wunna Maung Lwin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

Mr. Lwin (Myanmar): Allow me to extend our congratulations to Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser on his assumption of the Presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I am confident that with his wide knowledge, experience and diplomatic skills, we will be able to achieve fruitful results in our deliberations in addressing important and critical issues on the international agenda.

I would also like to convey our appreciation to Mr. Joseph Deiss for his able leadership and contributions to the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly. May I also take this opportunity to once again extend our congratulations to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his reappointment, and we wish to express our sincere appreciation to him for his dedication and untiring efforts for the cause of the United Nations.

Since I am addressing the General Assembly for the first time after the emergence of the constitutional Government and as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, I would like to apprise the Assembly of recent developments and significant changes taking place in my country. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has emerged as a new democratic nation in accordance with the Constitution approved by the overwhelming majority of the people.

Multiparty democratic general elections were held in Myanmar in November 2010 in line with the seven-step roadmap. Thirty-seven political parties, including 19 parties from different national ethnic groups, contested in the elections. Today, elected representatives are exercising their democratic rights in the legislative bodies.

The President, in his inaugural speech to the first regular session of the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw on 30 March 2011, stated that all elected Hluttaw members, including the President, are duty-bound to honour and safeguard the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The new Government pledged that all citizens shall enjoy equal rights under the law and is determined to strengthen the judiciary. The Government also assured the nation that it will amend and revoke existing laws and adopt new laws as may be deemed necessary to implement the provisions of the fundamental rights of the citizens.

With a view to maintaining and promoting friendly relations with all countries in the world, Myanmar is reaching out to the international community. In the past five months, Myanmar has received the visits of State leaders and high-level delegations from our neighbouring countries, as well as from other regions and international organizations. In return, President Thein Sein paid official visits to the Republic of Indonesia and the People's Republic of China. The President also attended the eighteenth summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Jakarta.

The new Government has launched a series of economic, social and policy reforms designed to improve the socio-economic life of the people of Myanmar. One of those measures is the stepping up of

its efforts to reduce poverty. In Myanmar, about 70 per cent of the population resides in rural areas and engages in agricultural and livestock farming. In order to boost production and enhance the economic development of rural areas, the Government has adopted forward-looking economic policies. Those policies will lead to sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth, which will in turn increase employment opportunities, promote agriculture development and reduce poverty.

Towards that end, the new Government has adopted the National Rural Development and Poverty Reduction Plan to alleviate poverty and to improve the livelihood of people residing in rural areas. A central committee and various work committees have been formed to supplement the eight tasks laid down under the National Plan. Furthermore, the new Government has increased pension allowances for retired service personnel commensurate with the changing economic and social conditions of the country. With a view to encouraging foreign trade, the Government reduced the export tax from 8 per cent to 2 per cent and granted export tax exemptions for all agricultural and timber products.

It is regrettable that the Government's efforts to improve the livelihood of the people of Myanmar are being hampered by economic sanctions. I would therefore like to call upon countries that have imposed unilateral sanctions on my country to lift those restrictions. It will also contribute to our efforts to achieve our Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets.

Myanmar attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of human rights. The fundamental rights of the country's citizens are guaranteed by relevant provisions of the State Constitution. With a view to promoting and safeguarding the fundamental rights of its citizens as set forth in the Constitution, the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission was formed on 5 September 2011.

Myanmar's cooperation with the United Nations has been clearly demonstrated by the Government's acceptance of the fourth visit of Mr. Tomás Ojea Quintana, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar in August 2011. Mr. Quintana recognized and welcomed the steps taken by the Government to improve the human rights situation in the country. He also welcomed the Government's stated commitments to reform and the priorities set forth by the President.

Myanmar has been cooperating closely with the United Nations Human Rights Council. Myanmar's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report was submitted and reviewed by the UPR Working Group last January and adopted at the seventeenth session of the Human Rights Council last June. Myanmar has agreed to accept 52.4 per cent of the total recommendations. We strongly believe that the UPR process is the most dependable and non-controversial monitoring mechanism for addressing and rectifying the human rights situations of all countries.

As for national reconciliation, the Government offered an olive branch to all the ethnic armed groups in the country through Announcement No. 1/2011 on 18 August, and some of those groups have accepted the Government's offer. The Government also granted an amnesty on 16 May 2011, with 20,000 inmates having been released by the end of July. I would like to take this opportunity to inform the General Assembly that the President, in exercising the mandate vested in him by the Constitution, will grant a further amnesty at an appropriate time in the near future.

The President invited people to work together for the interest of the nation despite differences. Accordingly, he received Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 19 August 2011, and, putting aside differing views, they had candid and cordial discussions with a view to finding common ground and exploring a potential cooperation in the interest of the nation and its people.

The foregoing are some of the significant items of progress we have achieved in our democratization process.

As an agro-based country, Myanmar is following with keen interest the issues involving the effects of climate change. Since agriculture is highly dependent on the climate, the implications of the climatic situation on agriculture cannot be ignored. Lately, floods and droughts have devastated crops and agricultural production in our region. It is evident that developing countries are the most vulnerable and will therefore be the first to suffer from global warming and climate change.

We therefore look forward to reaching tangible outcomes at the upcoming seventeenth Conference of

the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the seventh Session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol in Durban, South Africa. Although the road to Durban will be a difficult one, my delegation shares the view that our discussions on the issue should be placed within the context of promoting sustainable development. In that regard, we would also like to stress that all three pillars, namely, economic development, social development and environmental protection, need to be promoted in an integrated, coordinated and balanced manner.

Myanmar strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. In today's world, terrorism and transnational organized crime are increasingly threatening human society. Myanmar is also among those countries that have been victim of the scourge of terrorism. In that regard, we would like to express our deepest condolences to the bereaved families of victims of terrorism around the world. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to conducting a global threat review in order to re-assess security threats in the wake of the deadly attack in Abuja, Nigeria. Myanmar stands ready to cooperate at the regional and international levels to prevent and combat terrorism and transnational organized crimes. Without a stable and peaceful environment, sustainable development would not be possible for the people of a country or in a region and beyond.

The Millennium Declaration set 2015 as the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which were formulated to address the welfare and needs of people around the world. Despite some progress, development efforts have been hindered by various factors, such as slow economic growth, diminishing resources, increasing food prices and ongoing concern over food security, increasingly frequent natural disasters and the challenges posed by climate change. Each country has the primary responsibility to generate its ways and means for achieving social and economic development. However, national efforts to that end need to be supported by the international community.

For our part, Myanmar is determined to promote better living standards and the equitable development of its people. To generate income, microfinance schemes have been introduced at the grassroots level. According to the United Nations Development Programme, the poverty rate in Myanmar has decreased from 32 per cent to 26 per cent in recent years. However, we have to redouble our efforts to achieve MDG 1 by the year 2015.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons, promote nuclear disarmament and cooperation, and ensure access to nuclear energy. As a signatory to the Treaty, Myanmar remains committed to the three pillars of the treaty. As a strong advocate of nuclear disarmament, Myanmar has been tabling a draft resolution on nuclear disarmament every year since 1995, one which enjoys wide support from Member States. Myanmar firmly opposes the proliferation and production of nuclear weapons and strongly supports any efforts leading to the realization of a world free of the threat of nuclear weapons and their by-products.

Recently, the world around us has changed. We have seen changes in Governments and political landscapes. Myanmar has transformed and is moving towards becoming a democratic nation in a smooth and peaceful manner. We have now embarked on a series of reforms in various sectors to bring about democratization and economic development and improve the lives of our people.

The steps taken by the Government of Myanmar are concrete, visible and irreversible. We will ensure that the reform process is incremental, systematic and dynamic. Myanmar is strongly determined to continue implementing the democratization process despite all of the current challenges. At this critical juncture, the encouragement, understanding and support of the international community are crucial to Myanmar's transition to democracy.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Pham Binh Minh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.

Mr. Pham Binh Minh (Viet Nam): On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, on your unanimous election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I am confident that your diplomatic skills and experience will help to ensure the great success of the current session. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to Mr. Joseph Deiss for his significant contributions to the fruitful outcome of the sixty-fifth session.

The Vietnamese delegation also wishes to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment as Secretary-General. We believe that, with the cooperation of Member countries, the Secretary-General will make ever greater contributions to the operations of the United Nations and, thus, to global peace and development. We most warmly welcome the Republic of South Sudan as the 193rd Member of the Organization.

Today, peace, cooperation and development remain the over-arching themes of our time. Yet tensions and conflicts persist in most continents and regions, owing to unresolved differences within nations and the threat and use of force. Climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, transnational crime, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism are still the challenges that demand effective responses. The world economy's unstable recovery, coupled with economic downturns in many developed nations, has exposed developing countries to the risks of even more unequal terms of trade, rising protectionism, dwindling financial resources and the erosion of gains relating to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Multilateral negotiations on issues of common interest, such as disarmament and climate change, have not yielded results that meet our expectations.

The current situation compels nations to promote dialogue and cooperation so as to surmount common challenges, man-made and natural alike. Peace, security and stability remain the intense desire of all nations and are prerequisites for development. The key to success lies in each nation's own efforts, as well as in enhanced international cooperation and multilateralism based on respect for the fundamental principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, while taking into account the legitimate interests of all countries, especially developing ones. In that regard, Viet Nam commends you, Mr. President, on the theme that you have proposed for the general debate, namely, the peaceful settlement of disputes.

As rightly pointed out by the Secretary-General, never has the United Nations been so relevant and so urgently needed by so many people around the world. It must deliver concrete results that make a real difference in the daily lives of the world's people. With its universal membership, the Organization undoubtedly enjoys a unique legitimacy and should thus be at the forefront of global governance and multilateral cooperation.

Over the past several years, the United Nations has played a crucial role in ending conflicts and promoting peace processes in various regions. We deeply value the initiatives that place the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable at the centre of the international agenda, as well as initiatives to mobilize resources and capacities to fulfil internationally agreed action plans, including the MDGs; facilitate multilateral negotiations on climate change, as well as on disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; provide solutions to such pressing issues as desertification, non-communicable diseases, nuclear safety and security; and respond to the global financial and economic crisis. We cannot help mentioning the efforts of the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies to establish norms and set agendas in accordance with their mandates, so as to assist developing countries in their development endeavours.

At the same time, the international community looks to the Organization as a source of inspiration and strength, as a universal organization that can act decisively to counter any tendency that may undermine its credibility or contradict its fundamental values and founding purposes and principles. The Organization is therefore expected to uphold the values of peace and security, international law and multilateralism. It is also expected to become more responsive and effective on the ground, with the ultimate objective of better serving the needs and interests of Member States, in particular the developing countries.

As world peace and security are always our top priority, the United Nations should continue its concerted and coherent efforts to promote the peaceful settlement of civil wars and local conflicts in various regions of the world, especially those in North Africa and the Middle East, while preventing others from erupting.

We must cultivate a culture of peace and dialogue and promote the peaceful settlement of disputes. In that regard, Viet Nam supports efforts to end violence and strengthen national reconstruction and reconciliation in Afghanistan and Iraq. As regards Palestine's application for full membership in the United Nations Organization, Viet Nam wishes to underline the fact that we recognized the State of Palestine in 1988. We

have always supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their inalienable rights, including the right to establish an independent and sovereign State that coexists peacefully with Israel with the pre-June 1967 borders. In that spirit, we affirm our strong support for Palestine's efforts to soon become a full United Nations Member.

We support United Nations efforts to translate the outcomes of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the recently concluded High-level Meeting on nuclear safety and security into concrete results. We also support the Organization's efforts to revitalize the work of the Conference on Disarmament and move multilateral disarmament negotiations forwards.

In parallel with security concerns, the international community, with the United Nations at the centre, should work for more equal international relations, a fairer international economic and financial architecture and more just institutions. Developing countries must have a greater role and say in international governance. They should be enabled to take part in the globalization process in a more proactive and effective manner. Developed countries, for their part, should deliver on their obligations and commitments, including the maintenance of macroeconomic stability, contribution to the successful conclusion of the Doha Round, the elimination of unfair trade measures and an increase in development assistance.

Given the continued need to draw on the thinking and action towards a more stable and healthy global economic environment, we wish to recommend that the United Nations convene a meeting in the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council to follow up the Outcome of the Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development (resolution 63/303), which was held in June 2009.

In the meantime, the United Nations should undertake measures to prevent the unilateral use of economic means against developing countries. Viet Nam strongly calls for an end to the economic embargo against the Republic of Cuba.

Moreover, to promote inclusive and sustainable development, political commitment and efforts, with the central coordinating role played by the United Nations, must be doubled for the attainment of equitable and sustainable development for all. Four years from the agreed target date of 2015, it is essential that the global partnership for development be expanded, both in breadth and depth, so as to provide countries in need with relevant policy experience, resources and best practices to achieve the MDGs and maintain the process thereof.

Equally important is to begin developing a vision for a global development platform for the post-2015 period. We must also work much harder together to ensure the fruitful outcomes of the forthcoming seventeenth session of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in South Africa and the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Brazil.

Viet Nam is committed to working with other Member States to revitalize the General Assembly as the principal deliberative, policymaking and representative organ, to enhance the overarching role of the Economic and Social Council in the development sphere, and to enlarge Security Council membership and improve its working methods. We also look forward to more coherent, consistent and effective development activities of the United Nations system so as to align them effectively with the national priorities of recipient countries. In an effort to contribute to United Nations reforms, Viet Nam has been active in implementing the Delivering as One initiative and, together with the United Nations and other partners, has made tangible progress.

Viet Nam welcomes the adoption of resolution 65/281 on the review of the Human Rights Council. We wish to stress that the operation of the Human Rights Council and other United Nations human rights mechanisms should continue to be improved in order to become more effective, consistent and efficient, while focusing more on dialogue and experience-sharing. To further contribute to that end, we have presented Viet Nam's candidature for membership of the Human Rights Council for the term 2013-2016.

The year 2011 is important for Viet Nam since we have successfully organized the eleventh party congress and the elections of State bodies. We have also adopted a socio-economic development strategy for the next decade. During the past 25 years of comprehensive renewal, Viet Nam has made significant achievements in many aspects and the country has

integrated extensively into international life. We have managed to establish and strengthen stable and long-term frameworks of relations with major countries and global and regional economic and political centres.

Building on those achievements, in the coming period, Viet Nam is determined to comprehensively step up the renewal process, with higher quality and effectiveness, as well as national industrialization and modernization, in combination with the development of a knowledge-based economy.

In an effort to broaden and deepen our relations with other countries, Viet Nam will continue an independent foreign policy for peace, cooperation and development. Viet Nam is a reliable friend and partner, as well as a responsible member of the international community, working for the prosperity of every nation, national independence, global peace, democracy and social progress.

We shall enhance international integration and proactively participate in and contribute to regional and international multilateral forums, such as the United Nations, the Asia-Europe Meeting, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, on solving global issues of nuclear security, nuclear disarmament, crime prevention, climate change, sustainable development and cooperation on the Mekong River.

Furthermore, we are always willing to share with other countries our experiences in South-South and tripartite cooperation, financing for development, enhancing aid effectiveness and mainstreaming the MDGs into national socio-economic strategies.

We shall work closely with the other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other stakeholders for peace, stability, cooperation and development in South-East Asia, East Asia and beyond through ASEAN-led mechanisms and instruments, such as the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone, the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit.

In that regard, Viet Nam welcomes and supports contributions to peace and security in the Eastern Sea. Like other ASEAN members, Viet Nam is strongly committed to dialogue and confidence-building mechanisms and stands ready to support and participate in any effort to find peaceful settlements to disputes, in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and that are acceptable to all parties concerned. Pending such a solution, we will, along with the parties concerned, strictly observe the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the Eastern Sea. We welcome the stated commitments to working together towards the conclusion of a code of conduct in the foreseeable future.

This year's session of the General Assembly is taking place at a crucial juncture as the world is faced with daunting challenges. It is my firm belief that only by undertaking joint efforts and enhancing multilateral cooperation could we meet the expectations and aspirations of our peoples and manage to set out the right direction for the long-term development of the United Nations. Viet Nam remains strongly committed to that endeavour.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Elmar Mammadyarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadyarov (Azerbaijan): I would like to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of General Assembly at the sixty-sixth session, and wish you every success in that highly responsible post. I thank your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Joseph Deiss, for his productive work during the last session.

I also express my profound respect and gratitude to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his leadership and dedication to revitalizing the United Nations Organization.

With regard to the theme of this year's general debate, we welcome the adoption at the sixty-fifth session of resolution 65/283 on strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution. In that document, the General Assembly reiterated that all Member States should strictly adhere to their obligations, as laid down in the United Nations Charter, and reaffirmed, inter alia, the commitment to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States.

Azerbaijan looks forward to the relevant guidance for more effective mediation, as indicated in the resolution, and we are ready to actively contribute to its elaboration. Unfortunately, we have to admit that

not all States approach their international obligations responsibly and comply with the generally accepted norms and principles of international law.

For almost two decades, we have witnessed the flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and other documents of international law by the Republic of Armenia, which has perpetrated aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Azerbaijan. As a result of that aggression, almost 20 per cent of the territory of Azerbaijan remains under occupation and about 1 million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons are unable to return to their homes.

In 1993, the Security Council adopted four resolutions (resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993) 874 (1993) and 884 (1993)) demanding the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and reaffirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of the internationally recognized borders of Azerbaijan. The same appeals were made also by other international organizations. Unfortunately, Armenia continues to ignore the calls of the international community.

What is even more worrisome is that, instead of preparing its people for a peaceful, prosperous and stable future in friendship and cooperation with the neighbouring countries, the leadership of Armenia continues to publicly incite the future generations to new wars, violence and aggression and to propagate, by all means, the dangerous ideas of animosity and hatred towards not only Azerbaijan, but also other peoples of the region.

Illegal activities in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including the implantation of ethnic Armenian settlers, as well as the destruction and appropriation of historical and cultural heritage, represent another source of serious concern. Such activities serve to further consolidate the current status quo of the occupation, securing the results of ethnic cleansing and colonization of the seized lands, as well as to seriously hamper the prospects for conflict resolution. Earlier in this Hall, we heard a very aggressive and unconstructive statement by the President of Armenia. He openly confirmed that destructive policy of Armenia. (see A/66/PV.19)

The Field Assessment Mission conducted by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in October 2010 to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, stated, inter alia, that the status quo of the occupation was unacceptable and urged Armenia to put an end to its illegal practices in those territories.

As a country suffering from the occupation of its territories and the forcible displacement of hundreds of thousands of its citizens, Azerbaijan is the most interested party in the earliest negotiated settlement of the conflict. Our position is well known to the international community. It is based on strict adherence to the norms and principles of international law, according to which the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible and must be rejected resolutely and unconditionally.

It is absolutely illogical that the leadership of Armenia, which has implemented the total ethnic cleansing of not only the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, but also of the Azerbaijani population in its own territory, is trying to apply the principle of self-determination. It is obvious that one cannot expel peoples from their homes on ethnic grounds and, at the same time, speak about self-determination for those who remain on the same grounds.

Azerbaijan recognizes that the right of peoples to self-determination can be implemented only

> "at all times in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the relevant norms of international law, including those relating to territorial integrity of States",

as enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act.

Azerbaijan is confident that the conflict resolution must start with the withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories, within the fixed timetable, followed by the restoration of communications, the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the creation of conditions for the peaceful coexistence of Azerbaijanis and Armenians in the Nagorno Karabakh region within the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. That step-by-step approach, which has been proposed by mediators and supported by the international community, except, unfortunately, the leadership of Armenia, can bring durable peace, stability and predictability to the region.

Azerbaijan still maintains its interest, motivation and patience in that very hard and sensitive process of

negotiations. We believe that the international community will convince the Armenian side to respect the generally accepted norms and principles of international law and cease abusing the right of Azerbaijanis to live within their own territories, including the Nagorno Karabakh region. In return, we are ready to guarantee the highest level of self-rule for that region within the Republic of Azerbaijan.

I would like to touch upon another important issue of the international agenda — Palestine. Azerbaijan reaffirms its adherence to the position expressed by the majority of the United Nations Member States. We reiterate our long-standing solidarity with the people and leadership of Palestine, and believe that the time has come to reach a breakthrough in that long-standing and very important issue. The time has come for Palestine to be fully represented at the United Nations.

Azerbaijan is determined to contribute further to the realization of the development goals and objectives agreed within the United Nations. In recent years, Azerbaijan has enhanced its humanitarian assistance to support international and national efforts aimed at eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development and global prosperity for all. We pay particular attention to addressing the special needs and vulnerabilities of developing and least developed countries, as well as those recovering from natural disasters and suffering from climate change, in particular small island States.

The recent humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa once again demonstrated the importance of global solidarity. Azerbaijan has provided urgent aid to support the ongoing efforts towards the eradication of famine in that region. The Government of Azerbaijan is currently considering additional funding to support the international community in ramping up its efforts to respond to the humanitarian situation and contribute to a mid- and long-term sustainable solution to the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

Proceeding from the fruitful cooperation between the United Nations and the Government of Azerbaijan, resolution 64/186, entitled "Building connectivity through the Trans-Eurasian Information Super Highway", initiated by Azerbaijan, was adopted at the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly on 21 December 2009. As the main coordinator of the project, Azerbaijan has conducted a feasibility study and is financing the Secretariat of the project. We have taken a number of steps towards the establishment of a consortium, comprising of major telecommunications operators in the region.

Azerbaijan has always been a place of coexistence and tolerance among various faiths, ethnic groups and philosophies. It is one of the unique places where different cultures and civilizations meet at the crossroads between East and West and North and South.

As a bridge between cultures and an active member of the Group of Friends of the Alliance of Civilizations, Azerbaijan feels responsible for promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding. Thus, over the past years, we hosted a number of high-profile and action-oriented events, including the Summit of World Religious Leaders in April 2010, the World Forum for Intercultural Dialogue from 7 to 9 April 2011 and other similar events.

Desiring to contribute further to the maintenance of international peace, security, stability and prosperity, Azerbaijan has put forward its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term of 2012-2013. The elections will be held this year on 21 October at the General Assembly.

The year 2012 marks the twentieth anniversary of Azerbaijan's membership in the United Nations, although, unlike other candidates from the Group of Eastern European States, we have never had an opportunity to become a member of the Security Council. Azerbaijan's election to the Security Council would contribute to redressing the underrepresentation of small developing States and bring a more balanced membership to that United Nations organ. The Government of the Republic of Azerbaijan would highly appreciate the valuable support of the States Members of the United Nations for its candidature for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Dato Sri Anifah Aman, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malaysia.

Mr. Aman (Malaysia): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I have no doubt that, under your able leadership, the Assembly will be able to complete its

deliberations and proceedings successfully. In that respect, I wish to assure you of Malaysia's full support for your presidency. Permit me also to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment as Secretary-General.

The theme you have chosen for the general debate, "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means", is apt, fitting and timely. Indeed, the United Nations itself was established as an instrument of mediation to promote peace, security and stability among the nations of the world. Many in this body have spoken about the importance of settling disputes through mediation. Malaysia shares that view.

In the final analysis, peace can be achieved only if people are willing to engage in mediation. Now, more than ever before, mediation must be made to work in the Middle East crisis, as it is the only option available for the achievement of lasting peace.

Year after year after year, we have hoped for a peaceful and just resolution of the Palestinian issue. In the time that we have spent hoping, we have also come to realize that mediation is the only means of providing a sustainable resolution to all conflicts and crises. As such, all of us have a role to play in ensuring that it is effective. Patience and prudence have their merits, but patience and prudence must not result in paralysis. This body and the Security Council have adopted numerous resolutions on Palestine, yet there has been no tangible outcome.

We support the application of the Palestinians to the United Nations and welcome the readiness of both parties to hold talks on the basis of the existing international legal framework. In that connection, Malaysia fully supports the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people to an independent State of Palestine, based on the two-State solution, taking into account the security concerns of both parties.

For some time now, our world has been battered by unprecedented political challenges, devastating national calamities and financial crises. During that time, our institutions and mechanisms have seemed incapable of handling these challenges and the pace at which they surface. To compound the situation, while we address long-standing causes of international instability, non-traditional threats to peace and security, such as terrorism, pose additional challenges.

As we share the grief of those who lost their loved ones in the 9/11 attack 10 years ago, we must strengthen our resolve to eradicate terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. That can be achieved only by addressing the root causes of terrorism, which would cut off sympathy and support for those committing acts of terrorism. We must at the same time win the hearts and minds of the people to ensure that our victory over terrorism is not short-lived.

But the winning of hearts and minds is only half of what I would call the battle of perceptions. The other half consists of combating expressions of extremist sentiments. Despite our continuing efforts to promote world peace and harmony, we still witness the increasing trend to perpetuate and fuel Islamophobia. There have been attempts to pit Islam against the West, demonize Islam and to link Islam with terrorism. Those irresponsible acts further intensify the divide between the broader Muslim world and the West.

The real issue is not between Muslims and non-Muslims but between moderates and extremists in all religions, whether Islam, Christianity or Judaism. It is in light of the growing tide of extremist sentiments around the globe that the Prime Minister of Malaysia called for the creation of a global movement of moderates at this Assembly last year (see A/65/PV.19). This clarion call has come at the right moment in history. We must ensure that the voices of moderation, which currently constitute the silent majority, prevail over those of extremism in efforts to find solutions to the growing challenges faced by the international community.

There has been wide acceptance of this movement at the highest levels of global political leadership, such as the Asia-Europe Meeting and the East Asia Summit. More recently, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has endorsed the movement of moderates as its contribution to global developments. Malaysia will work diligently to ensure that the global movement of moderates will complement the ongoing activities of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and other intercultural and interfaith dialogues so that moderation will triumph over extremism.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the needs of States that are severely affected by natural calamities. The situation in Somalia has touched the hearts of many. For our part, Malaysia last month pledged $1 million to

the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Trust Fund for Somalia and dispatched a humanitarian mission to mitigate the sufferings of our Somali brothers and sisters. A valiant Malaysian son lost his life carrying out this mission. However, such incidents will never deter us from continuing to provide humanitarian assistance to all other countries in need.

In the field of the environment, we seem to be losing focus. We know that we are not lacking in good plans, but that we lack political will and the means to implement those agreed plans. As much as we are concerned about implementation failures, we are also concerned at the paralysing differences in on the areas of institutional framework and sustainable development. The failure of the Commission on Sustainable Development to deliver a successful outcome last May clearly demonstrated that.

The lack of progress and unwillingness to honour commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is another example. We must ensure that the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, coupled with historical responsibility, is enshrined in all our endeavours to achieve a successful conclusion on climate change negotiations and sustainable development.

In moving towards the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, there are new thoughts on strengthening the institutional frameworks for the environment. If the current institutional frameworks are unable to meet the daunting environmental challenges, we may have to look at new mechanisms that are inclusive and participatory, with equitable decision-making responsibilities.

Nuclear disarmament occupies a central role in the work of the United Nations. This is reflected by the fact that the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly spoke, among other things, of "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction" (*resolution 1(I), para. 5 (c)*). Yet 65 years on, it remains a silent dream. All States need to do their part in order to achieve more substantive progress in this area.

Malaysia is committed to working with other Member States to realize the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. We will continue to advocate the total elimination of nuclear weapons through a nuclear weapons convention. To progress further on that issue, consensus is required on commencing the multilateral negotiations process. This, in turn, will require good faith on the part of the States possessing nuclear weapons. I call on all those States to demonstrate such good faith.

It is apparent that the current international financial architecture is unable to cope with recent developments in the world financial markets. The World Bank has warned that we are about to enter a danger zone. We need a new financial architecture that will be transparent, equitable, representational and participatory and that will reduce volatility. Lessons can be learned from the economies of developing countries that embarked on economic reform and strengthened their financial institutions following the Asian financial crisis. Let us put pride aside and learn from each other.

In our quest to move up the value chain and enhance competitiveness, Malaysia has embarked on its own transformation programmes based on the concept of One Malaysia, the Government transformation programme, the economic transformation programme and the new economic model. As part of the transformation programme, Malaysia has taken a giant leap in reforming its internal security and emergency laws, which will be replaced by legislation to prevent subversive action, terrorism and organized crime.

Malaysia is transforming and reforming itself to better adapt to a changing global landscape. We believe that the United Nations must do the same. We would like to see a comprehensive reform of the United Nations so that it will be able to face current realities and address present challenges. Most particularly, the Security Council should be comprehensively reformed to make it more legitimate, representative, democratic and transparent. The Council must be effective, transparent and accountable to the larger United Nations membership in order to strengthen its mediation capacities. It must not remain beholden to the veto holders.

In that respect, I return to the President's theme. We need to adopt mediation in the search for peace. To that, I would add the principles of transformation and moderation. A combination of mediation, transformation and moderation will constitute a winning formula to realize lasting world peace. Let us take up the challenge with the fortitude required and together implement it for a united and a better world for all.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Arthur Peter Mutharika, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Malawi.

Mr. Mutharika (Malawi): First of all, let me say how pleased I am to come before the General Assembly and to address it on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi. The President was unable to attend due to other State commitments, but he sends his greetings to you, Sir, the Secretary-General and all the peoples of the United Nations.

At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. Your election is a manifestation of the confidence that the people of the United Nations have in your leadership. I wish you well as you lead this body in the next several months.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Joseph Deiss, the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, for his effective leadership during his tenure. I had the opportunity of working with him in Istanbul, and he was very helpful to me personally as a new participant in those international activities. He also showed much interest in Africa. I hope that, whatever he does in future, he will continue to show interest in Africa.

Let me also take the opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his unanimous reappointment as Secretary-General. His endorsement has demonstrated the international community's confidence in his leadership. I remember his visit to Malawi this past year, when he came to visit the Millennium Village. The people of Mwandama village anxiously await his return, and they have sent word through me to ask him, whenever he has time, to come back to Malawi.

Let me take this opportunity to join other speakers in congratulating our brothers and sisters of South Sudan for achieving their independence. I am particularly excited about this because, when South Sudan gained its independence, Malawi was Chair of the African Union and played a small part in its emergence as an independent State. I am very excited about that. The emergence of South Sudan is, I believe, a good manifestation of the importance of mediation and negotiation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means. There is no question in my mind that the remaining issues that exist between South Sudan and the Sudan will also be resolved in a peaceful manner. I therefore wish them well.

The theme of this general debate is "The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means". I consider this an opportune time to discuss that particular issue because today we are faced with new problems, including inter-State and intra-State problems. There is a new phenomenon of people who become divided over ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural differences within States. Methods must therefore be found to resolve disputes within States.

I therefore wish to commend the United Nations and to encourage the establishment of durable mechanisms to ensure that disputes between and within States are resolved in a peaceful manner. In that context, I congratulate the African Union, regional organizations and other international organizations for the mediation work they have done, especially in Africa. I would like to encourage developing countries, especially African States, to make sure to adopt the practice of resolving disputes in universities and to train people at regional and local levels in dispute settlement and resolution techniques.

There are a number of issues facing the United Nations and the world, but my country has identified five that I hope will be put at the forefront of the United Nations agenda at this and future sessions. The first issue is that of disaster relief and management. Disasters have now become a major problem in most of our countries. They strain the resources of the least developed countries, particularly in Africa. We face problems of floods, heavy rains, droughts, earthquakes, heavy winds and hurricanes almost every day. Such developments have the effect of turning back the progress made with respect to the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, I would like to invite the international community to set up mechanisms in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world that can assist us in managing disasters.

My country also attaches importance to the issue of climate change. Climate change has become an extremely difficult issue in Africa, where crops are destroyed because there is either too much rain or too little rain, too much wind or too much sunshine. All these possibilities are due to climate change. Therefore, I encourage the international community to come up with mechanisms to manage climate change. I know that countries like Malawi have not contributed to the

incidence of climate change. Nevertheless, we feel we do have a collective responsibility to make sure that the issue of climate change is addressed. I hope that the upcoming seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled to take place in South Africa, will address this particular problem.

The third area to which my country attaches importance is the issue of peace and security. As we are all aware, no matter how much development we achieve, it will be meaningless if there is no peace and security in our countries. Unfortunately, in our countries, especially in Africa, we now face a lot of challenges. There are movements of people who are bent upon bringing about unconstitutional changes of Government, thereby causing instability.

In the case of Malawi, we are committed to maintaining peace and security. We are also committed to democracy and good governance. In this regard, Malawi has, for example, instituted a number of bodies, such as the Malawi Human Rights Commission, an ombudsman, an anti-corruption bureau and the Department of the Auditor General. All these institutions are institutions of good governance aimed at improving the governance in our part of Africa, and certainly in Malawi.

Another issue that is of importance to Malawi in particular and to Africa in general is the issue of self-determination. We still have over 2 million people in different parts of the world living under colonial domination. I want to urge the international community to make sure that by the end of the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism — from 2011 to 2021 — all the territories under colonial domination will be free and independent. I think that self-governance is a very important concept. The self-determination of colonized peoples is enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Of course, there is another element of self-determination which the United Nations obviously has to address, namely, that of self-determination outside the colonial context. It is an extremely complicated problem that needs to be addressed and studied. First of all, what does self-determination mean within the context of non-colonial States? What are peoples within the context of non-colonial States? It is an issue that obviously we must address because it is an important one.

Finally, my Government attaches great importance to the role of the Security Council. There is no question that the Council has played an extremely important role since the creation of the United Nations in 1945. However, I think it is obvious to everybody that the structure created in 1945 is no longer applicable to the present situation. We need therefore to make sure that the Security Council is democratized. We need to make sure that majority of countries, especially those most affected by the Security Council, like Malawi and others in Africa, are given a role to play in the Council. I therefore would like to endorse Africa's common position, known as the Ezulwini Consensus, that two permanent member seats and five non-permanent seats in the Security Council should be given to Africa.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Surapong Tovichakchaikul, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand.

Mr. Tovichakchaikul (Thailand): On behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Thailand, allow me to extend to you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. It is a personal honour for me to speak for the first time before this gathering of the world's nations. Please be assured of my delegation's full support and cooperation in the conduct of the work of this body.

The year 2011 has already become a monumental year in modern history. The call for reforms in the Middle East and North Africa has led to unprecedented transitions and popular uprisings. The so-called Arab Spring underscores the significance of people's legitimate aspirations and the need to respond adequately to them. In this age of globalization, information, ideas and values flow beyond borders.

For Thailand, after experiencing some political unrest, the country has taken another step forward in its democratic process. The general elections held on 3 July this year went smoothly, which is a testament to the resilience of Thai democracy. The new Government has been successfully formed, with a solid mandate from the people. Indeed, the voter turnout was the highest in Thailand's electoral history. The Administration of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra is now working resolutely to deliver on the promises it made during the election campaign. In implementing people-centred policies, it seeks to establish a strong,

equitable and sustainable economic infrastructure in the country. More importantly, the Government is determined to promote reconciliation and uphold the rule of law to serve as a basis for harmony and unity within the country.

As far as our foreign relations are concerned, the Government will further enhance relations with neighbouring countries and our friends outside the region. Special emphasis is placed on promoting trust, confidence and mutual respect, which is particularly important as we prepare for the realization of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Community in 2015. We will also strengthen international cooperation at all forums and levels, particularly with the United Nations.

Thailand seeks to play a responsible and constructive role in the current international order. Thailand is convinced that the three pillars of the United Nations — peace and security, development and human rights — are all interconnected and mutually reinforcing. They are issues that need to be addressed comprehensively in order to achieve the ultimate goal of human security for our peoples. They are also issues that Thailand will emphasize in its cooperation with the United Nations.

In terms of peace and security, Thailand believes that this year's theme for the General Assembly's general debate, as proposed by you, Mr. President, is very timely. Mediation is a crucial tool for helping to resolve disputes peacefully. The recent birth of the Republic of South Sudan and its swift admission to the United Nations are clear testaments to the constructive role of Mediterranean and the continued engagement of the United Nations in conflict resolution. Thailand welcomes the Republic of South Sudan into the global community, and wishes to forge bilateral relations and a partnership for development with this new State.

Thailand is convinced that the peaceful resolution of conflicts is the most desirable and cost-effective approach in terms of both human lives and financial expense. For that reason, political will remains a key ingredient without which such an approach cannot be successful.

Wishing to do our part, Thailand has actively supported the comprehensive peace operations and peacekeeping missions of the United Nations in more than 20 locations around the world. We are currently deploying an infantry battalion with the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. We have also sent police and military officers to the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Timor-Leste and Haiti, and we are about to deploy military officers to a United Nations operation in Kashmir. In addition, since autumn 2010 Thailand has sent two counter-piracy task groups to join international efforts to patrol and protect ships from pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden area. These are just a few examples of our effort to play a meaningful role in maintaining international peace and security.

If international stability is one of our primary goals, Thailand firmly believes that a key foundation for lasting peace is sustainable development. Sustainable development is an essential tool for eradicating poverty and inequality, which are root causes of insecurity. As the guiding principle of our social and economic policy, Thailand has long taken a people-centred approach and adheres to the sufficiency-economy philosophy of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, which focuses on living in moderation and striking a balance between economic growth and the sustainable management of natural resources.

Our Government is also working resolutely to ensure, among other things, equal opportunity for all, free primary and secondary education, and universal health care coverage. Although we have achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ahead of schedule, we are resolutely pursuing the MDG Plus targets. In the greater scheme of things, we are determined that no one in Thai society should be left behind.

In order for sustainable development to be realized, cooperation among all sectors of society and partnerships with the international community are essential. Thailand has been active in promoting partnerships between developed and developing countries, and stands ready to serve as a bridge between both groups through triangular cooperation. At the same time, we will continue to strengthen South-South cooperation with our fellow developing countries, including those in the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

Thailand has also assumed a more creative and proactive role in cooperation with the international community in various development areas. Over the years, relations between the United Nations and

Thailand have evolved from a traditional donor-recipient relationship to one of partners in development.

Neither development nor peace and security can be sustainable if respect for human rights lags behind. Thailand firmly believes that human rights represent truly universal values. Respect for them must be a fundamental principle in every society. For Thailand, human rights issues are at the core of our domestic and foreign policy agendas. In terms of foreign policy, Thailand has striven to play a constructive role at the regional and international levels, especially through our membership of the Human Rights Council. During our presidency of the Council, Thailand was proud to direct the crucial task of reviewing its methods of work and operations in order to make it more relevant and credible. This was particularly important when it came to responding to urgent human rights situations in a more timely and effective manner.

Every Government must find its own solutions and move at its own pace in a manner appropriate to its specific context and conditions. Meanwhile, it is incumbent on the international community to support and promote constructive dialogue and engagement with countries of concern, while respecting their sovereignty, territorial integrity and the will of the people. Such support and dialogue should aim at strengthening States' capacity to meet their human rights obligations. Here it is important, in Thailand's view, to find common ground on the value of technical cooperation in enhancing human rights. We have been holding consultations on an initiative to enhance the efficiency of the Human Rights Council in providing technical cooperation to countries in need. Thailand hopes that this initiative will receive the broad-based support of countries from all regions in the Council.

With our genuine commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, Thailand is determined to continue playing a constructive role in the Council. In that regard, we will proudly stand for election once again for the 2015-2017 term. As Thailand continues to enhance its participation as a member of the Human Rights Council, we are determined to further contribute to human rights work and to strengthen the rights of vulnerable groups, both at home and abroad. We attach special importance to such groups, be they children, women, people with disabilities or the elderly.

One notable example is in the area of women's rights. In December 2010, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders, or the Bangkok Rules (resolution 65/229), based on an initiative of Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha. The Rules aim to enhance the human rights of female prisoners in criminal justice systems by fully recognizing gender sensitivity and the specific needs of women. Thailand is committed to promoting the implementation of the Bangkok Rules worldwide and looks forward to continuing to work closely with all relevant stakeholders. Moreover, the recent election of the country's first female Prime Minister confirms that Thai society is open to women and that we continue to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.

It should be evident from all I have said that the United Nations is a cornerstone of Thailand's foreign policy, and that Thailand has been an active player in all three pillars of the United Nations. Peace and security, development and human rights are truly inseparable and should be strengthened simultaneously. Given our past experience and continued contributions to all three, especially the maintenance of international peace and security, Thailand has presented its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the 2017-2018 term. We seek the support of our friends in the United Nations in this regard. We are convinced that such a position would enable us to fulfil our commitment to work closely and constructively with all Members of the United Nations. Let us rise to the challenge together.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Nassirou Bako Arifari, Minister for Foreign Affairs, African Integration, Francophonie and Beninese Abroad of the Republic of Benin.

Mr. Bako Arifari (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to convey to you, Sir, my heartfelt and sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session and to wish you every success in discharging your mandate.

I should like also to reiterate my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his reappointment as Secretary-General. I assure him of the full cooperation of the Government of Benin and the personal support of its Head of State in the vast

undertaking that is the modernization of the United Nations, which he has been working towards since he took the helm of the Organization.

I should like also to pay a well-deserved tribute to Mr. Joseph Deiss for the outstanding manner in which he carried out his mission as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session.

I should like to commend the selection of the theme of the sixty-sixth session, "The role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes". This reflects a recognition of the importance of dialogue and of the responsibility of third parties in the maintenance of international peace and security.

Conflicts, crises and wars represent a large part of the challenges faced by humankind. They undermine poorer States, whose efforts are often undone by indiscriminate violence, as deadly as it is destructive.

This legitimate interest in the use of mediation should serve as a catalyst for raising the awareness of stakeholders in all regions of the world as to the need to accord greater importance to dialogue in resolving problems, nationally and in the context of inter-State, bilateral, regional and international relations.

We would therefore like to commend the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union within the context of the special political missions, which are an optimum framework for mediation. Such partnerships can help to avert redundancy and duplication, which can be counter-productive and doom mediation efforts to failure.

Benin, for its part, which owes much to dialogue, very early on grasped the importance of that tool in the prevention and resolution of crises at the national level. In that respect, I believe it appropriate here to draw the attention of the international community to the fact that the Government of Benin has given high priority to the issue of mediation in its programme of action and, in that context, established the Office of the Ombudsman. We would also like to commend the creation, at the regional level, of the Association of Ombudsmen of Member Countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, which Benin chairs; indeed, most of the countries in the Union are relying on this important tool for the maintenance of peace.

Perhaps we should go even further and establish civil entities for mediation and the restoration of peace, whose members would meet with the parties to a conflict so as to re-establish dialogue among them and to prevail upon them to resolve their disputes peacefully.

The current state of the world makes clear the urgent need to strengthen multilateralism, with a view to averting the collective collapse that could result if appropriate or consensual solutions are not rapidly found to the global problems afflicting the world today. At the national level, we require greater cohesion among the vital forces of the country and greater determination in the context of actions aimed at eliminating the obstacles that impede development. With respect to preserving democratic institutions, when the fundamental values enshrined in the Charter are at stake, the United Nations must be at the forefront of the efforts of the international community.

In that regard, impartiality cannot be synonymous with neutrality, which would be unfathomable and make the United Nations a passive bystander to the triumph of aggression over the rule of law. I should therefore like to thank the Secretary-General for the courageous choices he has made.

In Benin, democracy has been strengthened by the tireless commitment of the United Nations to ensuring electoral transparency, which it accomplished through its support for the creation of a computerized permanent voters' list, which prevents any manipulation or other fraudulent manoeuvres and thereby ensures fairness in our country's elections.

Based on the success of our young democracy in Benin, my Government has been working to consolidate cooperative governance at both the national and local levels, so as to maximize the impact of the resources that have been mobilized and earmarked for the promotion of the well-being of all the citizens of our country. Accordingly, far-reaching reforms have been undertaken to reorganize the State and rid the country of the structural and behavioural incoherence that has impeded the State in its efforts to govern effectively.

The strengthening of democratic institutions and a fresh balance of powers is at the very heart of the constitutional review that is under discussion. Such a review must in no way affect the principal mechanisms that ensure the alternance of power, that is, the number of terms allowed the President of the Republic — strictly limited to two — and the age limitation of

70 years, beyond which one cannot run for the highest office in Benin.

The fight against corruption is a crucial aspect of that effort to streamline the State apparatus. The adoption in late August 2011 of a new law to fight corruption is in keeping with the national dynamic of ensuring transparency in the management of the State's resources and in the resolute fight undertaken against any practices that deny citizens the ability fully to enjoy the fruits of their labour. That new law enables us to better combat the various forms of illicit enrichment, as today it is up to the accused to justify the source of his wealth, not the accuser. This is a revolutionary development in the context Benin's judicial and legislative mechanisms.

At the global level, we believe in the benefits of multilateralism. That is why we see an ever greater need for the United Nations, which should be given a more assertive role in global governance — a United Nations that would spearhead and lead of actions aimed at promoting, within an inclusive framework, comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the manifold crises that are affecting the world and having direct repercussions for human rights.

Our Government, throughout its term in the Human Rights Council, intends, together with other members of the Council, to work to promote and protect universally recognized human rights, in a spirit of cooperation. Benin firmly believes in the universality, the indivisibility and the interdependence of all human rights. It has faith in international cooperation as the most effective means for promoting and protecting all universally recognized human rights.

Let us recognize the ongoing efforts made in past years by each of our countries, and collectively through international organizations both regional and universal, to manage the consequences of the various crises that affect the world, particularly developing countries — food, energy, financial, economic and environmental crises.

However, the international economic situation remains sluggish and uncertain. Indeed, the long-awaited international economic recovery remains slow and tenuous, while financial and stock market turbulence continues to affect the international market.

Even today, more than two thirds of the 800 million people in the least developed countries (LDCs) are living in poverty. The economic indicators of those nations — which have made prodigious efforts and heavy sacrifices to emerge from underdevelopment — call for great prudence with regard to attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Despite that rather bleak picture, we should continue our efforts to ensure that our countries can make progress in the spheres of good governance, development, health, water, sanitation, primary education for all and the empowerment of women and youth.

The developing countries, particularly the LDCs, need more than ever the transfer of modern technology to increase and diversify production, take a greater part in international trade and build the infrastructure required for development. The developed countries and the countries of the South that are experiencing significant economic growth should establish facilities to that end, as was agreed at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul from 9 to 13 May 2011. The new programme of action adopted at that Conference clearly reflects our shared ambition to ensure that half those countries move to the category of middle-income nations by 2020.

But however noble the goals set forth in the Istanbul Programme of Action may be, they cannot be achieved unless we respect the commitments already made. For that reason, despite the cyclical difficulties that characterize the current global economic situation, we must remain firm in our resolve to move forward.

There is no stable financial support for the development efforts of the LDCs without stable sources of financing. Therefore the Government of Benin strongly supports the innovative financing initiative for development. We call on the nations of the Group of 20 to take a closer look at that initiative so that taxation of financial transactions becomes a tangible reality during the weeks and months to come.

Threats related to climate change — particularly the continuing deterioration of the environment and drought, a source of famine in some parts of Africa — and the recurrence of natural disasters greatly undermine the future prospects of the LDCs.

Benin commends the United Nations preparatory work for the Rio+20 Summit planned for Brazil in June 2012. We hope those meetings will lead to robust

measures and decisions that match the perils that await us.

The threats that curtail our ambitions stem from other factors as well, such as the surge in transnational organized crime, which is quite pernicious. My country, Benin, has in recent months been the target of extremely serious and savage acts of piracy, armed robbery at sea and an influx of narcotics and counterfeit medicines. This scourge has not spared other countries of the Gulf of Guinea, which have also been affected to varying degrees. We are particularly distressed not only by the escalating number of such attacks and the increasingly sophisticated methods the pirates employ, but also and especially by the expansion of their field of action and the immediate effect of these attacks on port activities in Benin.

That situation complicates Benin's efforts to find the resources to handle the economic and financial difficulties related to external shocks, the repercussions of which severely impact the economy of small countries like ours. It also seriously hampers our ability to achieve the MDGs. The Government of Benin is working with our neighbour Nigeria to mobilize the countries of the Gulf of Guinea subregion for a coordinated response by developing and implementing a regional approach that involves joint manoeuvres to be launched shortly by the armed forces of Benin and Nigeria along the coast of Benin.

I call for the effective solidarity of States with expertise in the area of maritime operations to come to our assistance. Our resources are laughable, given the magnitude of the threat. Clearly, the fight against piracy requires technical and financial resources that a developing State cannot provide alone. Here I would like to thank the United States, France, China and other countries that have already shown spontaneous solidarity toward Benin.

The matters to which we need to find solutions grow ever more complex. The United Nations must continually improve its ability to closely define the challenges facing humanity and to help States formulate appropriate responses while preserving the delicate balance of interests of all stakeholders, as evidence of its efficiency and efficacy.

Along these lines, the negotiations to reform the Security Council must be intensified with the adoption of a specific timetable for their outcome, to be credible. My sense is that 2015 could be considered a deadline for completing negotiations and establishing an inclusive Security Council that would redress the historical injustice done to Africa with respect to its permanent representation in that body, which crowns the collective security system established by the United Nations Charter.

Benin says no, no, and a third time no. The time has come to put an end to an intolerable injustice that excludes an entire continent — the only one, Africa — from the supreme decision-making body with respect to international security.

I am certain that completion of Security Council reform will lead to greater trust and less suspicion in the management of today's great challenges in the realm of international peace and security.

My country has always advocated strengthening conflict prevention as a means to ensure international peace and security at less cost. Efforts to that end must be tirelessly pursued.

Prevention also includes effectively supporting young people to prepare them for their responsibilities, protect them from the risks they face and channel their energies towards participation in the development of their countries. We need to remove the obstacles that deter or prevent them from fulfilling their potential and divert them to risky behaviour of all kinds that harm public order and the stability of States.

That is why my Government was firmly committed to the holding of the United Nations High-level Meeting on Youth. Now that it has taken place, we need to do our utmost to ensure that its conclusions on youth are translated into specific actions as soon as possible. The great interest in that High-level Meeting shown by young people around the world reflects their will to become more involved in the search for appropriate solutions to the challenges facing humankind.

The Government of my country also believes that it would be useful for the United Nations to hold youth hearings every year, or every other year, to enable youth from around the world to address a specific subject, with broad participation of young delegates and young leaders of non-governmental organizations. Such regular mobilization of the world's young people in the heart of the United Nations would make our world Organization more inclusive and closer to our peoples.

For us in Benin — and I quote the President of the Republic, Mr. Boni Yayi — "there is no doubt that only those societies that give young people opportunities will be able to meet the challenges to come".

From 16 to 20 November 2010, Benin hosted an international symposium on the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of African countries. That meeting culminated in the drafting of an important historic document entitled "The Fiftieth Anniversary Manifesto". The African Union, at its most recent summit, held in Malabo on 30 June and 1 July, adopted the Manifesto as a reference document for the renaissance of the African continent.

The Anniversary Manifesto details, in the context of globalization, felicitous prospects with regard the challenges facing Africa in the coming 50 years, which will require new partnership approaches to promote development and more effective collective action for the renaissance of the continent. I firmly hope that the Manifesto will be taken to heart equally by the United Nations and lead to synergy and better coordination of efforts to mobilize the international community for the economic development of African countries so as to meet the legitimate aspirations of the people of the continent.

In conclusion, I want to note that recent history teaches us that the greatest threats to international peace and security come from peoples who have long been frustrated. The Palestinian question makes the Arab nation a frustrated nation. The United Nations today has the means to find a just and lasting solution to the Palestinian problem, and it must not fail to meet its historic responsibility.

We support a free and independent Palestinian State living in peaceful coexistence with the State of Israel. Benin gives ongoing support to the one-land, two-State solution and calls upon the Security Council to facilitate the prompt resolution of the problem, to bring relief to the Palestinian people, who endure daily suffering.

We believe in the virtue of mediation. The choice of that option as a way to resolve conflicts around the world in this sixty-sixth session of the Assembly offers a last chance for the two parties to re-engage in dialogue to finally bring lasting peace to the Middle East and to the world. The peace that we all so wish for must be based on universal respect for the cardinal principles and fundamental values contained in the United Nations Charter.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, Secretary for Relations with States of the Observer State of the Holy See.

Archbishop Mamberti (Holy See) (*spoke in French*): I have the pleasure of congratulating you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session. I assure you of the full and sincere collaboration of the Holy See. I also congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who during this session, on 1 January 2012, will begin his second term.

I would also like to cordially welcome the delegation of South Sudan, which became the 193rd Member State of the Organization last July.

Every year, the general debate offers the opportunity to address the principal questions that concern humanity in search of a better future for all. The challenges facing the international community are many and difficult. They bring ever more clearly in focus the profound interdependence within the family of nations, which sees in the United Nations an important agent, despite its limitations, for identifying and implementing solutions to major international problems.

Without attempting an exhaustive survey, my delegation wishes to reflect on a few of the priority challenges so that the concept of the family of nations can increasingly take shape.

The first challenge is a humanitarian one. It calls the whole international community — or better, the family of nations — to look after its weakest members. In certain parts of the world, such as the Horn of Africa, we are, sadly, facing grave humanitarian emergencies that force millions of people — the majority women and children — to leave their homes, large numbers of them being victims of drought, famine and malnutrition.

The Holy See renews its appeal to the international community, expressed many times by Pope Benedict XVI, to amplify and support humanitarian policies in those areas and to work to concretely address the various factors that amplify their vulnerability.

These humanitarian emergencies make clear the need to find innovative ways to put to work the principle of the responsibility to protect, at the base of which is the recognition of the unity of the human family and the innate dignity of every man and every woman. As is known, that principle points to the responsibility of the international community to intervene in situations in which Governments on their own cannot — or do not wish to — comply with their primary responsibility to protect their populations against grave violations of human rights and the effects of humanitarian crises. If States are no longer capable of guaranteeing that protection, the international community must intervene with the juridical means foreseen in the United Nations Charter and other international instruments.

However, it must be recalled that there is a risk that that principle may be invoked in certain circumstances as a pretext to use military force. It is good to recall that even the use of force in keeping with the United Nations rules should be a temporary solution, a true emergency measure, accompanied and followed by a concrete commitment to pacification.

For that reason, in taking up the challenge of the responsibility to protect, we must engage in a deeper search for the means to prevent and manage conflicts, exploring all possible diplomatic avenues through negotiation and constructive dialogue, noting and encouraging even the weakest signs of willingness to negotiate or desire for reconciliation on the part of the parties involved.

The responsibility to protect must be thought of not as military intervention alone — which should always be the last recourse — but above all as a requirement that the international community be united in facing crises. It must create forums for genuine, sincere negotiations, support the moral force of law, seek the common good and encourage Governments, civil society and public opinion to find the causes of and offer solutions to crises of all kinds. I must act in close collaboration and solidarity with the affected populations and place above all else the integrity and security of all citizens.

It is therefore important that the responsibility to protect, understood in that sense, should be the criterion and motivation that underlies all the work of States and of the United Nations to restore peace, security and the human rights. Moreover, the long and generally successful history of peacekeeping operations and the more recent initiatives in peacebuilding can offer valuable lessons for conceiving models for implementing the responsibility to protect in full respect for international law and for the legitimate interests of all the parties involved.

Respect for freedom of religion is a fundamental factor in peacebuilding, the recognition of human dignity and the safeguarding of the human rights. This is the second challenge I would like to reflect on.

The situations in which the right to freedom of religion is violated or is denied to believers of different religions are unfortunately many. We have witnessed rising intolerance for religious reasons. Christians are the religious group that currently suffers the greatest persecution because of their faith.

The lack of respect for freedom of religion threatens security and peace and hinders authentic integral human development. The particular weight of a given religion in a nation should never mean that citizens of other faiths are discriminated against in social life or, worse still, that violence against them is tolerated. In that connection, it is important that a common commitment to recognize and promote the religious freedom of every person and every community be promoted by engaging in sincere interreligious dialogue, encouraged and supported by Governments and international bodies.

I reiterate the concerned appeal made by the Holy See to authorities and religious leaders to adopt effective measures for the protection of religious minorities, wherever they are threatened. In that way, believers of all faiths everywhere will be able to live in security and continue to make a contribution to their society.

In thinking about the situation in some countries, I would like to repeat in particular that Christians are citizens like any other citizens, connected to their homeland and faithful to all of their national duties. It is natural that they should enjoy all the rights of citizenship, freedom of conscience and worship, freedom in teaching and education and freedom in the use of communications media.

Moreover, in some countries, although much importance is placed on pluralism and tolerance, paradoxically there is a tendency to consider religion as something foreign to modern society or even as a

destabilizing force. Various means are sought to marginalize religion and prevent it from having any influence on social life.

But how can anyone deny the contribution of the world's great religions to the development of civilization? As Pope Benedict XVI stressed, the sincere search for God has led to greater respect for human dignity. For example, Christian communities, with their heritage of values and principles, have contributed much to making individuals and peoples aware of their own identity and their dignity, as well as to the establishment of rule-of-law institutions and the recognition of human rights and their corresponding responsibilities. From that standpoint, it is important that believers, today as yesterday, feel free to offer their contribution to the promotion of a more just human order, not only through their responsible involvement in civic, economic and political life, but also through the witness of their charity and faith.

A third challenge that the Holy See would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly is the continuing global economic and financial crisis.

We all know that a fundamental element of the current crisis is the deficit in ethics in the economic structures. Ethics are not an external element of the economy; the economy has no future if it has no moral element. In other words, the ethical dimension is essential in addressing economic problems. The economy does not function only through market self-regulation, and even less through agreements that are limited to accommodating the interests of the most powerful.

The economy needs an ethical raison d'être in order to work for humankind. The notion of producing resources and goods — that is, the economy — and of managing them strategically — that is, politics — without seeking to do good through those same acts — that is, without ethics — has proven to be a naïve or cynical illusion, and always fatal. Moreover, every economic decision has a moral consequence.

The economy therefore needs ethics to function properly — not just any ethic, but a people-centred ethic that can offer prospects to new generations. Economic and commercial activities oriented towards development should be able to effectively reduce poverty and alleviate the suffering of the most disenfranchised.

In that regard, the Holy See encourages strengthening official development assistance in accordance with the Group of Eight commitments made at Gleneagles. My delegation hopes that the debates on this theme at the forthcoming High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development will bring the expected results.

Furthermore, the Holy See has repeatedly stressed the importance of new and more in-depth thinking on the meaning of the economy and its objectives, as well as a forward-looking review of the global trade and financial architecture to correct its dysfunctions and distortions. This review of international economic rules must form part of wider efforts to forge a new global development model. Indeed, the state of our planet's environmental health, and above all the cultural and moral crisis of humankind — the symptoms of which have been evident around the world for some time — demand this.

These considerations should also inspire the work of the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in June, on the conviction that "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development", as stated in the Principle 1 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

The sense of environmental responsibility and preservation should be guided by our awareness of being a family of nations. The idea of "family" immediately evokes something more than merely functional relationships or a simple convergence of interests. A family is by nature a community based on interdependence, mutual trust, mutual aid and sincere respect. Its full development is based not on the supremacy of the strongest, but on the attention paid to the weakest and most marginalized, and its responsibility extends to future generations. Respect for the environment should make us more attuned to the needs of the most disenfranchised. It should create a development strategy centred on the individual that promotes solidarity and the shared responsibility of all, including future generations.

This strategy can only benefit from the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty, planned for 2012. An unregulated and non-transparent arms trade has significant negative repercussions. It hampers integral human development and heightens the risk of

conflicts, especially internal conflicts, and instability. It fosters a culture of violence and impunity, which is often linked to such criminal activities as drug trafficking, trafficking in human beings and piracy. These are becoming ever more serious international problems.

The results of the current arms trade treaty process will test the true willingness of States to assume their moral and legal responsibilities in that regard. The international community, conscious of the great numbers of people affected by the illegal trade in arms and ammunition and aware of their suffering, must focus on concluding an arms trade treaty that is effective and enforceable. Indeed, the primary objective of the treaty should be not only to regulate the trade in conventional arms and obstruct the black market, but also and most importantly to protect human life and build a world more respectful of human dignity.

Indeed, the United Nations' contribution to building a world more respectful of human dignity will demonstrate its ability to effectively carry out its mission, which is to help the family of nations to pursue the common objectives of peace, security and integral development for all.

The Holy See is also concerned about the events unfolding in some countries of North Africa and the Middle East. I would like to take this opportunity to renew the appeal made by the Holy Father Benedict XVI, who called on all citizens, particularly young people, to do their utmost to promote the common good and build societies in which poverty is overcome, in which every political choice is inspired by respect for human beings and in which peace and harmony will triumph over divisions, hatred and violence.

A final observation concerns Palestine's request for recognition as a Member State of the United Nations, made here on 23 September by the President of the Palestinian National Authority, Mr. Mahmoud Abbas. The Holy See views this initiative as an attempt to find a definitive solution, with the support of the international community, to the question already addressed by the General Assembly in its resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947. That fundamental document sets down the legal framework for the existence of two States. One of them has already been born, while the other has not yet been established, although nearly 65 years have passed.

The Holy See is convinced that if one desires peace, brave decisions must be taken. It hopes that the competent bodies of the United Nations are resolved to help effectively implement the final objective, that is, achieving the Palestinians' right to have their own independent and sovereign State and the Israelis' right to security, both States with internationally recognized borders.

The response of the United Nations, whatever it may be, will not be a complete solution. Lasting peace can be achieved only through good-faith negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, avoiding actions or conditions that contradict declarations of goodwill. The Holy See therefore urges the parties to return to negotiations with resolve. It urgently appeals to the international community to increase its commitment and stimulate its creativity and initiatives in order to reach a lasting peace, in respect for the rights of the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The President: As representatives are aware, this afternoon the General Assembly will conclude its deliberations on agenda item 8, "General debate". It is my intention to present some concluding remarks at the end of that meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.